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[PRICE ONE PENNY.]



["HE WILL COME TO-MORROW," SAID CLERO; "BUT I CANNOT BEAR HE SHOULD LOOK UPON THE WRACK OF MY OLD SELF!"]

## THE FAMILY CURSE.

### [A NOVELETTE.]

#### CHAPTER I.

THE little Breton church was full of worshippers; the candles were lit; the paste jewellery bedecking the virgin shone with a meretricious glow, and the heavy scent of flowers and incense was almost sickening. It was a great saint's day, and all the people of the little town were making holiday.

Later there was to be a grand procession of the faithful, and an image of the supposed saint would be carried before it through the narrow and noisome streets, and the whole proceedings would conclude with dance and song. But now every one was devout, save the young Englishman who was standing in a darkened corner, and watching all that passed, with eyes full of amusement.

Presently a priest came down the aisle, pausing to whisper words of admonition or

comfort to the white-capped women and embarrassed-looking men.

He hesitated a moment before addressing a young girl whose dress proclaimed her English and a lady, and this drew the watcher's attention to the kneeling figure. He could not hear what the priest said, but he saw the sudden uplifting of the bowed head, caught a glimpse of a pale, beautiful face, and soft brown eyes grown suddenly defiant, and low-toned as was her reply it reached him where he stood, for her voice was singularly pure and clear.

"Leave me alone; I want quiet—let me pray in my own way."

The priest stood a moment half-abaashed, half-angry; then he placed his hands upon her shoulders with a gently familiar touch. The colour leapt high into the pale, patrician face, for many curious glances were directed towards her; then with a swift movement she freed herself from his detaining grasp.

"How dare you touch me!" she said, and, gathering her skirts about her, tried to make her way out. She was very young, and very nervous, now that her anger had spent itself,

and seeing this her countryman followed her; and when bewildered by her surroundings, not knowing whether to go forward or return to her seat, he advanced.

"Let me take you out," he said deferentially; "the crush is horrible, but I think I can manage it, if you will only trust to my guidance."

The frightened glance she cast upon him startled him; it seemed to tell how little accustomed she was to kindness or courtesy, despite her evident birth and breeding.

Shrinking from him, she said in a low, hurried voice, "Thank you, I can easily get out by myself."

The young man fell into the rear, feeling a trifle snubbed but not defeated, and presently, when he saw that all the girl's efforts to win her way out were vain, he again addressed her.

"You really cannot manage alone; and I will leave you, if you wish, as soon as you are safely through the porch."

This time, with a timid word of thanks, she accepted his offer, and in a little while, owing to the Englishman's muscular prowess, they had quitted the church. But the streets were



even worse, so full were they of laughing, chattering folks.

"Have you got far to go?" the young man asked; his companion gave the name of her hotel.

"Why, that is through the thick of the crowd; the procession passes that way; it would be wiser to accept my escort. You need not know me after to-night. We are both birds of passage and shall probably not meet again."

"You are very good to me," the girl said, in a low faint voice, "and—and I am frightened of the noise and rush around. I ought not to have left the hotel. But I was tired of doing nothing, and often when I have passed the little church I have thought how quiet and peaceful it seemed—and I wanted to go—"

"You only chose an unfortunate night for your venture; usually it is very deserted. Please give me your hand; we must keep close together unless we wish to be parted," and drawing her slender fingers within his arm he began to pilot her through the very devious and crowded streets. They did not talk much, the noise around was too great to allow that, and the young man was busy with his own thoughts.

He was wondering why so beautiful a girl, living in evident affluence, should wear so sorrowful and hunted an expression; and she on her part was only anxious for the moment to arrive when she might safely dismiss her escort. After what seemed almost a century to her, they reached the hotel, and there pausing, the girl said, "You have been most kind to me, and I thank you heartily."

She looked so beautiful under the soft light of the moon that some impulse compelled the young man to say, "I hope we shall meet again; and as a testimonial of respectability I beg to tender you my card."

She took it without so much as glancing at it, and if he hoped she would give him any information concerning herself he was mistaken.

She merely said, in tones which, despite their gentleness, were cold,—

"Your courtesy has made me your debtor. Thank you again, and good-night," and then she was gone.

But something of her remained, a handkerchief fluttered from her dress to the ground. The young man, possessing himself of it, read under the moonlight the one word "Enid." It was a pretty name worthy of its owner. Some day, perhaps, he would restore her lost property to her. What an unfortunate thing it was that he must return to England to-morrow! And up in her own room the girl glanced idly at the card she held. It bore the inscription,—

KENNETH BARR,

*Lincoln's Inn Fields.*

Then scarcely giving him another thought, she went down to join her stepmother. Mrs. Delaval glanced carelessly at her as she entered, she did not even ask her to account for her long absence; but as she sank into a chair, said, coldly,—

"I hope you have everything in readiness, Enid. We start quite early in the morning. There is no use in remaining here, since you have offended Monsieur De Frane by your excessively rude rejection. You are perfectly idiotic with regard to your admirers."

Enid made no response, only the sweet mouth which before had been so gentle, grew very stern, and the dark eyes gleamed with a strange light. Under her heavy white lids Mrs. Delaval watched her, hating her all the while that she was so much less docile than she had believed.

The lady was a handsome blonde, with large languishing blue eyes. She was graceful in figure and movement, soft of voice, at least in public, and in the prime of beauty. She was not more than thirty, and she really looked younger. As she lay back on her luxurious

couch, nipping her chocolate, her handsome fair face was not exactly good to look upon, because she dropped her mask when alone with the girl who was left solely to her guardianship and mercy.

"I cannot understand why you refuse to meet my friends, why you treat them with such marked disdain," she said, presently, "I hope that I am capable of choosing my associates with discretion."

The pale face turned upon her wore a very proud look.

"You force these men upon me," Enid said, jolly. "You are anxious to be free of me. I am ashamed again and again every day by your too obvious manoeuvres to be rid of me. I will have nothing to say to them."

Mrs. Delaval laughed lightly.

"You are such a prude, and you would have me believe that you discourage your little court of admirers. Nonsense! men do not follow one persistently without some slight encouragement."

Enid was standing now, her lithe young figure drawn to its extreme height. Even then she was small beside this handsome, smiling woman.

"I have never encouraged attention from any man. You cannot truthfully say I have. I hate your friends one and all."

"That is a nice and Christian-like feeling, and, as heroic bore me, I would be glad if you would go to your room at once."

Without a word Enid obeyed; she was scarcely eighteen and was wholly in her stepmother's power, and revolt seemed all in vain.

The next morning a trim vessel sailed for England, bearing with it Mrs. and Miss Delaval, also a young man who was chatting in a pleasant desultory fashion with a little lady, who seemed absolutely revelling in the keen sweet air and the lapping of the waves about the vessel.

"I am never sick," she said, with a smiling look at the young fellow. "If I had had the fortune to be born a man, I would have been a sailor: I love the sea. And how nice it is to meet you! Really, Kenneth, I dared not hope for such a treat."

She was thirty, only five years his senior; but she adopted such a pretty matronly manner with him that she seemed to set herself miles and miles away from him in point of age, and amongst his circle of fair friends there was no one he esteemed so highly as Mrs. Mathilde Forbes.

"It is just as great a pleasure to find you are to be my companion," he responded, with almost boyish frankness. "You're always such a jolly companion. Oh! I say, look there! That girl is lovely, or would be if she did not wear such an anxious expression. I met her last night."

"That," said Mrs. Forbes, "is Enid Delaval. I know her well. She has not seen us. Ah! just as I thought, she has gone down to dance attendance upon her exquisite stepmother, who is an awful sailor; but she will come up presently. And now tell me how and where you met her."

She spoke imperiously, and half laughingly Kenneth obeyed her command, not even concealing the fact that his avocations had seemed unpleasant to the young lady, and he concluded with the remark,—

"But you do not really mean that her companion is her stepmother? I should say she is no older than myself."

Mrs. Forbes laughed.

"She is precisely my age, although she looks younger; old Mr. Delaval committed the mistake of marrying a woman thirty years his junior. But to the last he was positively infatuated with her, and I must say that his will was a most iniquitous one. By it, Enid is left to the sole care of her stepmother, not attaining her majority until her twenty-third birthday. And if she marries without Mrs. Delaval's consent she loses every farthing she possesses, and the elder lady takes all. That

is obviously unfair, especially as Enid and Mrs. Delaval never have been friends."

"But the widow looks good-tempered," said Kenneth, with the tolerance men usually show to beautiful women, "and Mr. Delaval may have had some very good reason for disposing of his daughter in his own fashion."

Little Mrs. Forbes smiled in a superior way.

"I expected you would say something of the kind. Cleo Delaval is very handsome and clever."

"That is not like you," he retorted. "Sneers are foreign to your nature."

The grey eyes flashed a quick half-scornful glance at him; then Mrs. Forbes said, lightly,—

"So much for a man's discernment. Why, my dear lad, I am nothing if not sarcastic. I enjoy nothing so much as picking my dear friends to pieces—fact," with a gay little nod, and then she added, quickly, "Here is Enid. Wait here, and I will bring her to you. The ceremony of introduction shall be performed with all due pomp."

She darted away, and in a moment more was greeted with evident warmth by Miss Delaval; but it pained the young man to see she was quite averse to renewing her acquaintance with him. He could tell by Mrs. Forbes' gestures she was entreating her to do so, and he thought, angrily,—

"Does she take me for a secondarily adventurer that she will not know me? Why on earth can't Mathilde Forbes exercise her usual tact and acceptance as an answer?"

Then he saw that his friend had captured her victim, but her evident reluctance to know him was still vexing him, and his manner was constrained as he submitted to an introduction. Miss Delaval bowed, and murmured a few words coldly, and then left Mrs. Forbes entirely to entertain the young man. (She herself stood looking idly into the sea, her face declaring nothing of her thoughts. When addressed she answered only in monosyllables, so far as that was possible, and, apart from her beauty, Mr. Barr began to consider her uninteresting. Presently the stewardess brought her a message from her mother, and she went hastily away; then Mrs. Forbes, turning quickly towards Kenneth, said,—

"I know just what you are thinking. In your own mind you are condemning Enid Delaval as a pretty fool."

"Has Elijah's mantle descended upon you?" he retorted, with an embarrassed laugh.

"No, I don't cultivate the art of prophecy; but a woman generally can gather a man's thoughts from his face. Enid Delaval is a most gifted girl, and so, my good friend, your judgment is at fault. She may be, and the troubles of her life have made her older than her years; but if you do not end by liking her immensely, I shall quarrel with you."

"Then I will promise to 'like her immensely'; and if she disappoints me, I shall blame you."

Before the brief voyage was over he saw Enid again. This time they were alone, and he expressed a hope that Mrs. Delaval's condition had improved.

"Oh, yes, mamma always recovers when within sight of land," Enid answered, "but it is really dreadful how she suffers on sea."

"You apparently escape all unpleasantness."

"I! oh, yes! I am never sick. I love nothing so well as a sailing vessel."

"You are like Mrs. Forbes in that respect."

"Yes. Isn't Mrs. Forbes just the nicest woman you know? It is quite impossible to believe she can ever grow old, and she is such a loyal friend."

She looked so radiant, speaking thus of the little woman, she so cast away her ordinary reserve, that the young man looked at her with admiration.

"You are greatly attached to our mutual friend?"



"There is no one I love so well; but, unfortunately, we do not meet often. Mrs. Forbes prefers the country, and mamma likes town life best."

"Who takes my name in vain?" cried a gay, soft voice. "Ah, Enid, it is you! and do you know that we are nearly home? Are you going back to the Kensington flat?" and there stood Mrs. Forbes smiling at them.

"I am sorry to say we are; yes, of course, will run down to Deerholme and so we shall lose you. You are just a will-o-the-wisp."

"I am not going to Deerholme just yet; I have my society mood on, and I shall be almost within a stone's throw of you. Oh! I promise you that you will soon be weary of me, you will see me so often."

"Never too often," and then the light and colour died out of Enid's face and eyes as her stepmother appeared. She was looking pale, but exquisitely beautiful, and was dressed in dearest garments; she met Mrs. Forbes cordially, although, indeed, that little lady treated her with scant courtesy, and very reluctantly introduced her to her favourite Kenneth.

It was the first time the young man had met a woman of Cleo Delaval's stamp, and her beauty, her grace, her soft, sweet manner all impressed him favourably. Really, he thought his old friend and Miss Delaval were very prejudiced, and he exerted himself to please with such success that at parting Mrs. Delaval said,—

"We shall be quite settled in two or three days, and, if you will call upon us, I shall be glad," she had drawn from him all the incidents of his first meeting with Enid. "I have not the slightest doubt you are thinking me terribly informal. I suppose I am. Enid studies the proprieties, and occasionally lectures me with regard to them—but I am afraid, despite my years, and I am getting horribly old, I never shall learn to consult Mrs. Grundy."

She laughed lightly as she spoke, flashing a mischievous glance at him.

"If we are to be friends at all, Mr. Barr, you must take me as I am, with all my imperfections on my head; Enid will atone for my shortcomings," with a glance at her stepdaughter. But Miss Delaval stood apart; her face had lost its radiance, and her eyes had grown hard.

The widow sighed. "Poor child!" she said, scarcely above a whisper, "poor child! Ah, Mr. Barr, you do not comprehend the difficulties of my position."

He began to murmur some sympathetic responses, but Mrs. Forbes, who had hitherto kept silence, broke in with that exasperating little laugh of hers.

"Difficulties agree with you, Mrs. Delaval, for really I could not convince Mr. Barr that you and I are of an age—we are getting quite passé."

Never had Kenneth liked his old friend so little as at that moment; he had believed her quite incapable of malice, and now he glanced quickly at the widow for some sign of resentment, but saw none.

With a smile, she said,—

"You are right and I must begin to adopt the matronly style; but it is hard to let one's youth and early womanhood slip by."

Enid did not again join them; neither did she, at parting, add to her mother's invite by word or look, and Kenneth, if the truth must be told, was angry with her. They parted with greatest frigidity, he going his way with Mrs. Forbes whose house lay in the route he must take.

"Well?" she said, laconically.

"Well? What?" he answered, perversely. "Oh, you know what I would say? What is your opinion of our new friends?"

"Miss Delaval is very beautiful; but she is disappointing; her manner is repellant."

"To avoid argument, I will let that pass—and the fair widow?"

"I think she is a lovely and kindly woman placed in a cruel position."

"That is just like a man," retorted his companion. "You are all ready to rise in defence of women as fair as Cleo Delaval! What a power beauty is!"

He looked at her half-regretfully.

"I did not think you could be so unkind."

She laughed contemptuously.

"You don't know me very well yet—and perhaps, I am jealous of Cleo's superior attractions. I will get down here, and if you are not too busy, I shall be pleased to see you as early as you choose to-morrow."

A moment later she had entered her home, and, throwing aside bonnet and cloak with the carelessness of a child, went up to her study, for Mrs. Forbes was a great light in the literary world. She gave one swift glance round; there was a note on the table, she read it with a little hardening of the lips.

"I could not wait longer for your return; gone to the club."

"ARCHIE."

She tore it across, tossing the fragments into the fender, and she smiled as she said aloud, "So like a man;" but her smile to one who read between the lines was sadder than any tears.

## CHAPTER II.

Mrs. Forbes was at Deerholme, her lord and master having conceived a sudden and violent passion for his country residence; and the wicked little woman smiled as she wrote Kenneth Barr to run down for a few days.

She had learned that he was in the habit of calling frequently upon the Delavals; she was convinced that the elder lady was obtaining a great influence over him, and she said with a savage clenching of her teeth,—

"If he were let alone, he would succumb wholly to Enid; so it is, he really does not know which woman he prefers, and as a 'young man's fancy lightly turns to thoughts of love,' it is my duty to see that love is of the kind to insure his happiness."

So she begged Enid of her stepmother, who was willing to let her go, having made arrangements for her own pleasure; and then, when they were comfortably settled, and Enid very happy, for they saw little of Mr. Forbes, she wrote to Kenneth.

He reached Deerholme on a Saturday, protesting he was glad to leave town behind, although he must return on Monday.

"But," he added, "I will be glad to run down once a week if you will have me;" and smiling over the success of her plot, the little lady led him out into the pleasant gardens, where they found Enid—such a changed Enid.

All her shyness and reserve had vanished, and Kenneth's heart throbbed faster than it should as he took her little hand in his.

Even when Mrs. Forbes left them alone together, she showed none of the painful reserve which at once repelled and allured him. She talked brightly and well; she used such quaint, humorous turns of speech, that Kenneth found himself wondering and smiling over them.

He made no reference to Mrs. Delaval, or to her ordinary every-day life—it was so pleasant to find her gay. They wandered from the gardens to the adjacent meadows, where Enid gathered a handful of frail blue speedwell.

"And what are these?" asked Kenneth, touching them lightly. "I confess I am a perfect ignoramus with regard to botany."

"These," said Enid, smiling, "are what the Devon people call 'angels' eyes,' but Mrs. Forbes has a different name for them; she calls them 'man's faith,' because a breath of wind destroys them."

"Mrs. Forbes is a Philistine, and must not be allowed to inoculate you with her own scepticism," he retorted; "it is too bad of her."

Enid was thoughtful in a moment.

"I do not fancy," she said, sadly, "that Mrs. Forbes has had any very pleasant experiences with regard to men. Sometimes I think she is not happy."

"Not happy!" she cried, incredulously. "She is the brightest woman I know."

"The merriest are not often the happiest," answered Enid, and so dismissed the subject, as though it were disloyal to discuss her friend in her absence.

On three successive Saturdays Kenneth found his way to Deerholme, and Mrs. Forbes saw with satisfaction that he took increasing pleasure in Enid's society; and that although no word of love had passed between them, the young people seemed perfectly to understand each other.

She was annoyed when Mrs. Delaval wrote requesting Enid to return home at once, saying that she did not like her to lose a whole season; but she contented herself with the reflection that Kenneth was now bound fast with the chains of love, and in honour compelled to declare himself so soon as chance permitted.

It was not long before he presented himself at the Kensington flat; and then, to his surprise and disgust, Enid had fallen back into her old reserve, and he saw but little of her.

Mrs. Delaval, more beautiful and gracious than ever, welcomed him cordially, and gradually her influence over him became so great that he seemed to care less daily for Enid's presence.

What the girl suffered then none knew but herself. She had given all her pure heart into Kenneth's keeping, and now he cared no longer for the treasure he had won.

Pride held her silent, lent dignity to her manner, and Kenneth could not read between the lines. Gradually she absented herself from her mother's circle—that was at Mrs. Delaval's request, although Enid did not confess so much even in her letters to Mrs. Forbes.

She used to sit at her window, watching all who came and went, torturing herself with the daily sight of Kenneth, wondering vaguely why he came so often and stayed so long.

One morning he came earlier than usual, and finding Mrs. Delaval alone, ventured to ask for her stepdaughter.

"She refuses to see you," answered the widow, with downcast eyes. "Enid is peculiar, always in extremes; but, poor child, the fault is not hers."

He looked at her questioningly, and she, reaching forward, laid her white jewelled hand upon his.

"May I trust you?" she entreated. "I so need a friend; but for that poor child's sake I have held my peace until now, when her vagaries have grown almost too many for me to endure."

She looked so beautiful with that wistful expression on her face, so womanly and tender, that he lost his senses and took possession of the white soft hand.

"You may trust me. I shall be proud to serve you."

Mrs. Delaval hesitated a moment, then she said,—

"You must have noticed Enid's variable moods—how cordially she has greeted you at times—how frigidly she occasionally refuses your kind offices, and, oh! most painful of all, with what dislike she regards me. Some of my oldest friends have deserted me owing to her strange speeches. Poor child! this is but the outcome of her malady—"

"Her malady! What do you mean? You must be more explicit."

"To you, yes, but to none other. I feel I may confide in you fully. There is madness in the family, and she, poor child, has not escaped the curse."

"Great Heaven!" he cried, in shocked tones, while all his heart stood still within him. Was she mad, that fair and gentle girl, who, for so many weeks had made life beauti-

ful to him? And, then, like one in a dream he heard Cleo's soft voice saying,—

"It is only now and then she exhibits any sign of this dreadful evil, and I wish to keep the unhappy fact secret. She has had many admirers—is she not lovely? But I have always contrived to prejudice her against them, feeling it my duty to prevent any alliance she may wish to contract, and by her father's will I have supreme control over her until her twenty-third year."

He sat dazed and stupid. This thing had come upon him with a shock. He had loved, or thought he loved Enid; he had told her so, not in words, but looks and tones; and she was mad!

It required all Mrs. Delaval's tact and ingenuity to win him from that thought; but she was a clever woman and a beautiful one, and before he left her he had spoken words of passionate love and admiration.

He never could quite tell how it had come about. He was not satisfied with himself as he walked homewards. Mrs. Delaval was not quite the sort of woman he had wished to marry, beautiful and gracious as she was. It was that very loveliness which had dominated his will and made him a traitor to Enid—poor Enid, with that awful taint of insanity weighing upon her! Ah, well! it was best that he should marry Cleo; and despite the fact that she was five years his senior, she looked much younger. Oh, yes, he was a lucky and a happy man.

He went again that evening, carrying with him the ring which was to be sign and seal of his betrothal, and Cleo received him with a smiling lovesome face. With all her heart she worshipped him—love came to her late in the day, and then with terrible force.

She had seen his growing passion for her stepdaughter, and had done her best to conquer it. She believed she had succeeded and her heart was at rest, only she was fully determined that Kenneth should have no chance of meeting Enid until their marriage was an accomplished fact.

When he had gone she went up to the girl's room, smiling in her triumphant love.

"I am going to surprise you," she said, advancing towards her. "I have such glad news for you. I am going to be married, and to the man of my choice."

"Married!" echoed Enid, "married!"

"Yes. Why should you be astonished? I am young still, and have not lost my good looks entirely. I am the happiest woman on earth." Here she sat down, and with her white hands loosely folded upon her lap, went on: "I have nothing left to desire; but I have been thinking, dear, that under these changed circumstances you might prefer for a little while to visit some of your father's relatives. When I am Mrs. Barr I shall be most glad to have you again under my care."

"Mrs. Barr!"

Enid forced herself to say the words quietly, and the other, watching her with malice in her blue eyes, answered, lightly,—

"Oh, did I not tell you his name? Well, really, I was rather nervous about this announcement; for you see, Enid, you have always shown such a marked disapproval of him. But I am consulting my own happiness and Kenneth's in this matter. It may be selfish; but even you, Enid, will acknowledge it is natural."

"Quite natural," the girl answered steadily, her voice. "I wish you and Mr. Barr all that you can wish for yourselves."

"Thank you, dear," and Cleo, rising, kissed the unresponsive lips. There was no sign of weakness in the pale flower-like face; the girl was too proud and reserved to show how much she was suffering; and when her stepmother had left her side, she said quietly, "I know so little of my cousins; I would prefer returning to Mrs. Forbes, who really wishes to have me—and—married people, so I have heard, are best alone."

"Then why go to Mathilde Forbes?" with a slight and scornful smile.

"Oh, Mr. Forbes is hardly ever at home, and his wife wants a companion; and I, of course, shall not remain long as a guest. It is my wish to share the expenses of housekeeping—the Forbeses are not rich."

"Well, my dear, you can please yourself until the knot is tied, then I must have you home again with us—because I take another name I shall not forget my duty to your honoured father," and then she went away, leaving Enid free to indulge in a terrible proxyism of woe. This then was the man she had loved! Ah! how he had trifled with her heart; what a fool she had been to place such faith in looks and tones that meant so little! Did he guess she loved him? Would he and Cleo make merry over her folly? She covered her face in an excess of shame.

"She is a wicked woman," she said, under her breath. "She has stolen him from me, but they shall not see I care—only—I cannot meet him yet with this blow so fresh and cruel. I must go away or I shall die."

That was the burden of her refrain; and when she had wept herself almost blind she began to put all her belongings together in a methodical fashion. The old life was over and done with—it had been very hard—the new had begun, and it promised to be still more cruel. Well she would make no moan; tears and plaints never healed such wounds as those she bore, and away from Cleo she would find peace—and peace was good.

In the morning she announced her intention of starting for Deerholme, and Mrs. Delaval did not oppose her; in fact she hurried her departure lest she and Kenneth should meet, and bidding her a cordial good-bye, sat down to congratulate herself over her own good fortune. Enid had not sent any message to apprise Mrs. Forbes of her coming; in the hurry of her going, and because of the pain she was bearing, she had forgotten such a trifling detail. The little lady started up in amazement when the well-loved voice spoke her name, and with unfeigned delight sprang up to meet her.

"My dear Enid! what lucky wind has blown you here?"

"It is not a lucky wind at all, Mrs. Forbes; rather the reverse. Mrs. Delaval is going to marry again, and just now I am *de trop*."

"Really women are dreadful fools," remarked the other. "What is the lucky man's name, and what has Mr. Barr to say on the subject?"

Enid laughed tunelessly. "He has everything to say, I should suppose; he is the most interested in the engagement."

"What!" cried Mathilde, "do you mean to tell me Kenneth Barr is going to marry Cleo? Has he bidden good-bye to his senses? Why—oh, Enid! I hoped—shall I tell you what I hoped?"

"No; I could not bear it. Mrs. Forbes, will you let me come and stay with you awhile? I will not hinder but try to help you—I might even act as your secretary—and if I can help myself I will never go home."

Then to this one friend to whom she could open her heart, she added, "There has not been a day since I left the schoolroom that she has not made a burden and a shame to me! She has endeavoured always to thrust me on any man who had seemed attracted in the least by me. She has done this so openly, so shamelessly that I have often thought that death would be better for me than such a life. There have been terrible scenes between us, and sometimes I have forgotten my own dignity; it was so hard—so hard—for no matter how base a man might be it was always the same—she was anxious to be rid of me."

"That of course. Her motive is pretty clear: if you made a *mésalliance* she would claim your share of the fortune; and she wanted to force you into such a folly—and, thank Heaven, she has not succeeded. As for Kenneth Barr—"

"What of him?" questioned Enid, bitterly. "Well, he has behaved just like a man; and he does not visit me any more. Enid, my

poor child, put all thought of him out of your head. Don't you suppose I know how things have gone with you? Oh, we poor women! we poor women! My dear, you have got to learn that love is a vain thing and friendship a question of self-interest."

"But," said Enid, quickly, "you have married, and you are my friend."

"I am a wife, yes," with a short laugh; "and your friend now; but see that you do not trust me too far. I am only human—and," just for a moment she dropped her mask, "I am a merry but not a happy woman. Now take your wraps, and let us have tea, and believe, oh! you must believe, if only for a little while, that I am most glad to have you back again; and you must have your own room, let me take you to it."

Despite her previous bitter words there was something so infinitely tender in Mathilde's manner that Enid could but feel a certain comfort, and her load of trouble was a little lightened.

They spent three quiet hours together, and then, Mr. Forbes returning, they dined in the quaint old room which Enid was wont to declare was the loveliest in the lovely old house.

Her host welcomed her cordially—she was young and she was pretty, two very great recommendations in his eyes—and, knowing nothing of her unhappy love, was pleased to be factions concerning her stepmother's proposed alliance. Delicacy not being his strong point, he said,—

"Cleo Delaval was always a cunning witch, she married first for money, and she knew well how to wind old—I beg your pardon—I should say your father—round her finger. Her word was always law to him. Now she will marry for love, I suppose; and the Barrs are a good family, but Kenneth is a fool."

Enid heard and suffered in silence. She did not like Mr. Forbes, and she found herself wondering continually why Mathilde had married him. And when familiarly bred contempt of her opinion, and he indulged very freely in harsh speeches to his wife, and she received them without protest, never flagging in her duty, she wondered the more.

Perhaps Mathilde saw this, for one day, when he had been particularly abusive, she turned swiftly to Enid.

"Don't blame him," she said, "I deserve it all. I never should have married him; but I was hurt, angry, and wretched—he was most persistent in his attentions. You see he loved me then, although it is hard to believe it now; and the man I loved," this with a crimson flush, "had forsaken me. I did as many another proud woman has done before me, I accepted another lover to prove my heart was not broken. There is the whole truth. It has been told to none but yourself. You had better be dead than marry a man who does not call your heart his own;" and without further speech she hurried away, leaving Enid full of pity for her.

When they met again she was her ordinary bright self, and never again referred to her own story.

But to Enid there was something terribly pathetic in her constant solicitude for one who cared so little for her; her gentle ministrations which never received any thanks; her earnest, honest efforts to do her duty by this man who had no idea of duty to himself, and very little of honour.

She wondered that Mathilde could carry herself so bravely, for to her little world she was the merriest small woman under the sun.

Although neither would confess it, they were happiest when Archibald Forbes was absent. Then Enid was allowed to play at being secretary, and that was pleasant, although, indeed, Mathilde's work suffered in consequence.

Cleo wrote often, always extolling her future husband's goodness, boasting of his passion for her, although indeed there were times when he was so *trait* that she was oppressed



with the fear that even at the eleventh hour Enid might win him from her.

The preparations for their wedding were going on apace. Cleo had been introduced to and warmly welcomed by her fiancé's family, and the ceremony was to take place early in October.

The bride-elect would have much preferred an earlier date, but she did not venture to say this, for Kenneth had a masterful manner, and a "will of his own." Then, too, he had a very decided objection to anything savouring of boldness in a woman.

Thus matters stood as the golden summer ripened and waned, and but for the fact of her lover's desertion and one other trouble, Enid might have been a happy girl. That other fact was that Archibald Forbes had chosen to develop a great attachment to herself, which for the while was all-absorbing, as it always is with such men.

He persecuted her with his odious attentions, following her like a tame cat from place to place, until in an agony of shame she prayed for guidance. And slowly, slowly her resolve was made, and it held fast. She might suffer untold agony, but no act of hers should increase that secret sorrow Mathilde bore. She wrote to Cleo, her letter running thus:—

"Circumstances compel me to return to you without delay. I can give you no explanation of my conduct, put it down to caprice. I shall be with you to-morrow at four-fifty. Do not trouble to meet me, the journey is a mere nothing; and I will endeavour to efface myself as much as possible.—ENID."

Cleo pondered over this note as she sat by herself in a pretty room overlooking the sea; for she had engaged apartments at Hunstanton, where the Barrs would presently join her.

"Now what does this mean?" she questioned of herself. "I must find that out; and I don't intend my affectionate step-daughter should come between me and my happiness. I don't believe she has quarrelled with Mathilde Forbes, they are so mutually attached; but there is a mystery somewhere, and I intend to find the solution."

She did not doubt her own powers to do so. She had all the shrewdness of a detective, and she was well versed in artifice; so she waited almost patiently for Enid's arrival, ordering the daintiest of dinners, and spending much time in adding to her many attractions.

The girl herself had gone to Mathilde on the previous evening.

"I must return to Mrs. Delaval," she had said. "You will forgive me that I leave you so abruptly; some day, perhaps, I may come again; and however strange and erratic my conduct may seem, try to believe I love you now and always."

Mathilde was a trifle paler than usual, but she gave no sign of emotion, she uttered no complaint, although indeed she had seen and understood all that passed. Now she reached up and took the girl's face between her hands saying, gently,—

"If you feel it is for your own happiness to go, dear, I will not be so selfish as to keep you here; and when it is right and good for you to return, I shall welcome you with a glad heart and open arms;" and then she kissed her very, very gently, and went with her to do the necessary packing; and if her heart ached, none was the wiser, for Mathilde Forbes was strong.

Cleo, lovelier than ever, met her step-daughter with extended hands.

"You are more than welcome, *ma chérie*," she always affected French phrases and French manners, "I am positively distraught and tired of my own society. Kenneth and his people do not arrive until to-morrow. They are very nice to me, and I am quite sure you will like them."

She talked of herself and her prospects with malicious disregard for her listener's feelings; but Enid had learned a lesson of self-control from Mathilde, and bore it all bravely.

Then on the following morning, when Cleo sat by herself, Mr. Forbes was announced. He looked haggard and wild, and demanded rudely to see Enid.

In an instant Cleo guessed the truth. She had known her visitor many years, and was not devoid of discernment. Now she said, with admirable simplicity of manner,—

"Enid is somewhere on the beach. I suppose you bring a message of recall. Mrs. Forbes and dear Enid are almost inseparable; but really you must spare her to me for a few weeks."

He had already taken his hat and turned towards the door.

"I will go in search of Miss Delaval," he said, hoarsely, and with a vain attempt to smile; "but I am afraid Mathilde will not be content to spare her long," and with a few rapid compliments he disappeared.

Mrs. Delaval smiled.

"Sets she wind that way," she said, *sotto voce*; "more than ever now is Kenneth mine."

### CHAPTER III.

But Enid was not on the beach. She was safe in the old church where none could molest her, and it was not until the evening that Mr. Forbes discovered her, walking alone upon the cliffs.

She had gone out to escape Kenneth, and Cleo rejoiced in that fact. She met her lover with an air of subdued anxiety and sadness, and was apparently reluctant to tell him the cause of her changed manner.

Little by little, however, he drew from her that Mrs. Forbes had sent Enid to her with an indignant letter, having discovered that her husband was infatuated by her, and that up to a certain point Enid had encouraged him. Now she was frightened by her own folly, and would do anything to escape from the results.

"But," she added, "Archibald Forbes has followed her here—she is away from home even now, and I am frightened. Do not judge her too harshly, Kenneth; remember, she is not always accountable for her actions."

She looked so fair and sweet as she lifted her dewy eyes to his, that he hated himself because deep down in his heart smouldered his love for that "poor mad girl," as Cleo was wont to call her.

He started to his feet, declaring his intention to search for her, and his fiancée tried vainly to dissuade him from his purpose. Then she begged he would allow her to accompany him, but this he negatived, and she dared utter no protest lest he should suspect something of the truth. So she waited in fear and trembling for his return.

Kenneth went hastily to the beach, but he did not find Enid there. She always shunned society, and remembering this he turned to the cliffs. He had to walk a long way before he came in sight of two familiar figures, and he hastened towards them. The clear, fresh air bore the girl's words towards him.

"How dare you follow me? How dare you so betray your wife's confidence and seek to dishonour her? You are a contemptible coward!"

Then the man spoke.

"You encouraged me by your kindness." "It is false!" Enid cried, fiercely. "I tolerated your society because I loved Mathilde, and I would not give her pain by showing my contempt for you. And you—knowing how friendless I am—have presumed to follow and address me as no other man would have dared. Oh! with a break in her voice, "is there no one to help me?"

"Yes! I am here," and the next moment Kenneth had dealt Forbes such a blow that he lay senseless and rigid on the grass before them.

"You have killed him!" Enid cried, in wildest alarm; but Kenneth only said, with an ugly look on his face,—

"I wish I had. Leave him there, he will soon revive. Now let me take you home, Mrs. Delaval is very anxious concerning you."

Enid looked sceptical, and despite her agitation at seeing him, her fear of Forbes, yet insisted that they should stay by him until he recovered his senses. But that was not part of Kenneth's programme. Grasping her hand, he drew it within his arm, and despite her resistance forced her to go with him.

"He is Mathilde's husband," she urged. "We must not leave him thus."

"He richly deserved his punishment, and Mrs. Forbes must look to her own. Why, in Heaven's name, why did you give that brute license to address you as he did?"

The eyes that met his were wide and anguished. It was too cruel that he should judge her by so low a standard—he who had won her heart and idly cast it aside.

"You shall not speak to me in this way," she cried, fiercely. "Let go my hand. I—I hate you!"

She could not understand the half-doubting, wholly pitiful look in his eyes as he said,—

"Poor girl! poor girl! I wish to Heaven it were given you to know friends from foes. No, I will only leave you when you are safe in Cleo's keeping—that is my duty."

She was too proud to struggle longer. She walked back to her stepmother's lodgings white and stern. Now and again she glanced over her shoulder towards the prostrate figure, and had presently the satisfaction of seeing Archibald Forbes rise and slowly make his way homewards. She hoped he would not trouble her again; but she was not grateful to Kenneth for his assistance, because she knew he doubted her.

She went at once to her room, to brood over her sorrow and the many indignities she was forced to endure, and in her despair she cried aloud, "All these things will drive me mad!"

And downstairs Cleo was lamenting her unhappy condition.

"Her father's people have wished me again and again to place her under some gentle restraint," she said, "but always I have refused. When we are married," with a coy glance at him, "I shall have an ally and shall no longer feel afraid."

Inwardly Kenneth shrank from the idea of living in daily communion with Enid, but he gave no sign of this, only he assured Cleo that in all things she should have his support and help; and he thought how greatly wronged she had been, how little the world knew of her goodness and her kind heart.

He interviewed Forbes that same evening, and, after a stormy scene, succeeded in proving to the elder man that any further insults offered Miss Delaval would be promptly revenged. He wished so far as possible to spare him, Forbes, any exposure for the sake of his wife, and ended with a passionate entreaty that in no way would he endeavour to exert an influence over a poor girl who was not always responsible for her actions.

At that Archibald laughed. He guessed in a moment the story Cleo had told to further her own ends. He could have enlightened Kenneth considerably on certain matters, but he remembered the chastisement he had received, and in revenge he held his peace.

On the following morning he left Hunstanton for Deerholme; and Kenneth was not slow to apprise Enid of this fact.

She looked at him with cold eyes.

"Why do you tell me this?" she asked; "I am not interested in Mr. Forbes' movements. So long as he does not molest me I am content."

"Why are you so hard with me, Enid?" he questioned, trying to take her hand. She shrank back from him, the colour rising to her face.

"We used to be such friends. Poor child! I wish only to be your friend now. I so deeply deplore your unhappy condition."

She interrupted him swiftly.

"Mrs. Delaval's friends can never be mine. I told you so from the beginning."

"Enid, won't you understand how much she labours for your welfare? Won't you try to see something of the beauty and sweetness of her nature?"

"I am blind to these things," she answered, wearily, "and I do not wish to discuss your future wife's merits with you. I only want to be left alone; but I tell you frankly that when you are married I will not have my home with you. If coercion is used I will find a refuge from trouble as so many have done before me."

There was such a wild expression in her eyes as she spoke that if ever he had doubted Cleo's statement he doubted no longer. He only said, soothingly,—

"You will overcome your objection to this marriage soon. Just now it may seem to you that Cleo is forgetful of your father; but when you have had time to think quietly you will see how very natural it is she, who is so young and beautiful, should form new ties. Let us be friends."

Friends! with all the past between them! How dared he mock her so.

She laughed scornfully.

"I do not see how that could be: I do not wish it. I will not be tormented in such a fashion."

Kenneth was angry at last. "You shall not complain of my persistence again," he said, in a white heat. "I will try to efface myself from your memory and your life alike."

"I thank you," she answered, with a frigid bow, "I shall be the happier;" and then she went away to weep as though her heart would break.

Of one thing she was resolved. She would not remain with Cleo after her marriage—she could not.

If her father's will could not be set aside, if her stepmother would not consent to allow her departure, there was always one remedy—a dreadful but a sure one.

The poor child had suffered so much and so long that she did not shrink from the thought of death in whatever fashion it came; and she was so terribly tired of warring with fate. She only wanted rest. What was there now to live for? Kenneth was false. She could not go to Mathilde. In all the world she stood alone.

Of her father's people she knew very little, for there had been a dreadful family quarrel years ago, and his second marriage had only made the feud more violent.

As she looked towards the unquiet sea she thought—

"Oh! if I were but lying there how much happier for me. Heaven help me! I wish I were dead!"

The time dragged wearily by, the wedding-day was fast approaching, and much of Cleo's time was occupied by milliners and modistes. Still she found leisure to enjoy the delight of Kenneth's society, and he felt himself disloyal when he wished her less affectionate, less solicitous.

He had taken apartments close to his fiancée, so that he saw very much of her, and their excursions were numerous. It is needless to say that Enid never shared them.

He was dawdling over his breakfast one morning, feeling unaccountably listless and depressed, when a servant brought in a letter. The handwriting was that of Mathilde Forbes. He was pleased to receive it, because of late she had quite ignored his existence; but he was afraid it contained ill news, for a deep black border encircled the envelope. Opening it he read,—

"MY DEAR KENNETH,—

"Will you come to me at once. We have not seemed very good friends of late, and yet, believe me, I have never ceased to feel an interest in you, only circumstances have been unfortunate for us. When you know of my bereavement you will not refuse my request.

Mr. Forbes is dead. It seems impossible to me, who saw him ride out in perfect health and strength last Thursday. But he was thrown just a mile from home, and lived only long enough to confide a secret to me, and beg me to give you his message as soon as the earth had closed over him. He was buried yesterday, and I am here alone, with the exception of kind old Mrs. Clayson, who has, indeed, proved herself a true friend to me throughout this trying time. I much prefer telling you this trying story to writing it; letters occasionally miscarry, and there is a great wrong to be righted. Delay is dangerous. Always your sincere friend,

"MATHILDE FORBES."

So Forbes was dead! Kenneth wished now his last interview with him had been of a more amiable nature. He had never liked the man, but death softens animosity. Then there was poor little Mathilde! how lonely she must be; and did she feel her bereavement deeply? It was like her to dwell very little upon her own troubles.

What story had she to tell? What on earth was the message Forbes had left to him of all people? and the wrong to be righted?

He never hesitated a moment about going to his old friend; and ascertaining he could start in the course of an hour, he went to acquaint Cleo with his movements.

She was profoundly astonished and greatly annoyed, although she was clever enough to conceal the latter fact. She had an instinctive dread of this projected visit, and as she clung about Kenneth she prayed him not to go.

"It is unreasonable," she protested, with a pretty pout, for Cleo at thirty could safely assume girlish airs; "why, I see so little of you even now. Why cannot Mrs. Forbes write you at length? I am jealous of every hour you spend away from me!"

"She is in trouble," he answered, gravely, "and she has been most good to me always. You don't want me to play the ingrate?"

"No, no; but oh, Kenneth, I—I do not like her. I am afraid of her influence over you; and she estranged Enid's affection from me. I do not know why it is," plaintively, "but she positively hates me!"

Remembering some of Mathilde's words, he was too honest to refute her statement; he only said, caressingly,—

"I will return as quickly as possible, Cleo; my place is by your side now and for all time, and I hope one day you and Mrs. Forbes will understand each other better. There is a great deal of good in her, more than you guess. Then, too, sweetheart, it would be brutal to refuse her any help I may afford in this time of calamity."

"Oh! you don't know, you don't guess!" cried Cleo, a trifle angrily. "She never loved her husband. His death has not given her an hour's pain!"

"Hush!" Kenneth answered, quickly, "it is not like you, Cleo, to be harsh or unjust," and then she dared say no more; but when he rose to go, she begged him, if possible, to return that night.

She was in an agony of fear lest the truth should now be made known; and whilst he was assuring her that he would rejoice to see her as soon as Mathilde had no further need of him, Enid entered.

She would have retreated at once, but he stayed her exit, and told her of Mr. Forbes' death. All the coldness left her face, her eyes were dewy with tears.

"I am so grieved," she said, uncertainly, "so grieved for poor Mathilde! You will see her? Will you ask her if there is nothing I can do for her? She has been so dear a friend that her troubles weigh upon me as my own. Tell her I send her my heart's best love, and that I hope to see her soon."

Then she went away; he thought she was crying—was it grief as Forbes' untimely death, or sorrow for Mathilde that so moved her? That first thought was torturing him still

when he bade good-bye to his disconsolate and vexed-looking fiancée, and it remained with him through all his journey to Deerholme.

Mathilde greeted him with every evident pleasure; she was looking very pale and worn, and smaller than ever in her sombre robes, but she neglected nothing that might conduce to her guest's comfort; and not until Mrs. Clayson had retired did she broach the subject which so much puzzled and troubled Kenneth.

But once alone she turned quickly to him. "What I have to say to you must necessarily be painful to you; but even if it were not a duty to the dead, I should still not spare you now, because you would suffer a hundred times more cruelly in the future."

"Just before his death," continued Mathilde, "Archibald told me of a most shameful deception practised upon you; he could have enlightened you then—I mean at Hunstanton," passing thus over the dead man's sin against herself, "but he was angry with you, and anger is like madness—he saw everything in a distorted fashion—but you will forgive him now. It appears from certain words you uttered he gathered you believe Enid Delaval is not altogether responsible for her actions."

"I am sorry to say it is so."

"It is not. I wondered at your treatment of Miss Delaval and was very angry with you, because I thought, like most men, you were fickle in your fancies; now I am only sorry for you—and Enid. She is no more insane than I am; there never was madness in the Delaval family, as you could have learned had you taken the trouble to inquire. But it suited Cleo to tell you that."

"You are speaking of my future wife," Kenneth said, stiffly, although his heart was throbbing madly, and a great doubt of Cleo's truth troubled him.

"I remember that unhappy fact, Kenneth, and so far as I can, will spare her; but I will not let you drift unwarned into certain misery. Before her marriage Mrs. Delaval was Cleo La Marchant. The cause of her family is insanity! Her father died in a private asylum, a raving lunatic; her only surviving relative, her brother, now occupies the room he left vacant. She has apparently escaped, but do you for an instant forget what a curse you may lay upon your possible children? This thing must not be. Kenneth! Kenneth, my poor boy! do not take it so cruelly—do not even accept my word for truth; make inquiries yourself—I have no more to say."

He hid his face upon his arms: he was unfeignedly shocked. Cleo, his beautiful betrothed, she whom he had believed so holy and so kind, had lied to him from first to last. The taint of madness was in her blood—and he had promised to make her his wife! As a man of honour he was bound to fulfil his word! Then there was Enid; the girl he loved with the best and purest instincts of his nature—what should he say to her?

Could he lightly let her go? He lifted a haggard, tortured face as he asked, "What shall I do! Tell me in the name of Heaven what I ought to do? I am like one at sea."

"I dare not advise you," Mathilde said; "I will have no hand in the matter, lest I mar your life. I have told you the truth; now you must act upon it as you please. Poor boy, this is very hard upon you."

#### CHAPTER IV.

VERY little sleep did Kenneth get that night the way seemed dark enough before him. He was honourable, some folks said to a quixotic degree, and now he thought that having bound himself to Cleo, he must go through with his engagement.

She had lied to him, had deceived him grossly—might that not be a form of madness with her? But she loved him, and their names had been linked together.

He shrank from putting her to open shame or pain; a woman always suffers more or less



through a broken engagement. What could he do?

He rose unrefreshed, and unrefreshed. Mathilde, quiet and sympathetic, ministered to his comfort, and, with the tact she always displayed, asked him no questions. But breakfast being ended, he informed her that he must go at once; at all events he and Cleo must have an explanation. What the result of it would be he could not guess, but he was evidently in a not-very hopeful frame of mind.

She let him leave her after speaking a few kind words, and then she sat down to wonder how it would all end, and in what fashion Cleo would receive his upbraidings, and if Enid would be called upon to suffer because of them.

When Kenneth reached Hunstanton all his heart revolved at the mere idea of the task before him, and to postpone the evil moment he walked towards the beach, which at such an early hour was not crowded, and there he met Enid.

"You have seen Mrs. Forbes," she said, with something of her old sweet manner, "will you tell me about her, please?"

"I have a great deal to tell you," he answered, heavily. "I wish you would walk with me a little away from the rest of folks. Do you mind?"

"Oh, no! Have you seen Mrs. Delaval?" She was anxiously expecting you."

"I have come from the station here; I wanted time for thought. Mrs. Forbes had a strange story to tell me; I am glad that I met you, for it concerns you too. Wait until we come to a quiet spot, and I will tell you everything."

They walked on in silence a long time, then Kenneth began his tale. He told of his love for Enid, how from the beginning Cleo had misrepresented matters—he dealt very gently with her. She had wronged him, but she was the woman he had chosen to bear his name, and deep down in his heart there was a vast pity for her. But after all he was only a man, and a young one, and he loved the girl beside him, so there was small wonder that he ended with the words—

"And now tell me what I am to do? I am bound to Cleo, but I love you with all my heart and soul. Can I in honour take my freedom? Answer me, Enid; I am too bewildered to act for myself."

She was very pale, but her sweet face wore a look of courage as she said—

"It is true that I love you even as you desire, but I dare not advise you. Don't you see—oh! Kenneth, don't you see that I am the very last person to do so? It may be Cleo has escaped this dreadful scourge; if not—if not, I pity where I condemn, and I freely forgive. No, no, do not touch me; I am not strong enough for that. Have pity; perhaps there is some mistake, Mrs. Forbes may have erred. At all events, you owe it to Cleo to hear her defence."

"But, Enid, what of our lives? Must both be wrecked?"

"I hope not, I pray not; but whatever comes, I shall never be wholly unhappy, because I know that you really have loved me, that I was not sport for your idle hours, and in time perhaps I shall learn to be content."

"Content! With all the future laid waste before me? No, Enid, no; let us take our fate into our own hands; no one will blame us. Give me the right to call you wife. My dear one, my dear one! you shall never regret it."

His face was eloquent with passion; but she answered—

"I will never be your wife by fraud; I will never risk losing your esteem by dealing falsely towards another. And then she laid her tender hands upon his arm, whilst her voice grew inexpressibly loving: "Dear, to-day we must part, and what the future may hold for us we cannot tell; only I would have you remember always, if the remembrance is no

sin, that no one will ever fill your place in my heart, that I shall love you until my last breath, and shall be a proud woman if ever it is given me to serve you; that to insure your happiness no sacrifices will be too great for me. Now, if you please, leave me. Good bye."

She looked so sweet and fair, so pure, standing there by the lapping waves, that he realized to the full all that he had lost, and his heart was as lead within his breast. He hated the tremble that bound him, and in an access of passionate pain, cried—

"Kiss me but once, Enid! Heaven knows if we shall ever meet again together—I, a free man. Give me at least the only boon I dare ask of you now."

She shivered a moment, whilst her eyes vaguely traversed all the lovely landscape. There was no one in sight—the solitude was awful to her in this sad hour—the waves were leaping and tossing, shining green and white under the clear sky—myriads of flowers glimmered in the grass on the cliffs above; and high up in the air a bird was singing. She would remember this scene, this hour, so long as she lived.

Very slowly she turned to him with outstretched hands, just as slowly she lifted her face to his, and there, under the smiling sky, kissed him in token of farewell. He held her fast a moment; it seemed to him he could never let her go—what a fool he had been to dream Cleo could ever efface her from his memory and heart!—then he gently set her aside.

"Good-bye," he said, and went his way, feeling that unless Cleo was merciful life was practically over for him. Enid watched him go; she neither moaned nor wept, for the life seemed dead within her, and as he disappeared from view, she sank on a little heap of pebbles, with a sigh of utter hopelessness. It was all very well to tell him she could bear life-long separation from him, so long as she was sure that once he had loved her; but that fact did not comfort her much in this first hour of her desolation.

Kenneth went reluctantly to Cleo's apartments; she was looking exquisite in a pale blue dress, and she rose to meet him with a smile and a tender glance which made his task but the more difficult—she so evidently loved him. But his expression warned her that he knew the worst. With a sharp cry she sank upon a couch, all the pretty colour gone from her cheeks, all the light fading from her eyes, so that in an instant she looked old and wan.

"Cleo," he said, "I have come to you to learn the truth of a statement made by Archibald Forbes in his last hour—it concerns you—indeed, it impugns your honour, and, as your future husband, I demand an explanation."

Her white hands met in a gesture, half-despairing, half-defiant, as she answered, with evident effort—

"It was like Archibald Forbes to carry out his cowardly revenge even in death. He loved me once, and I would not so much as glance at him; after that he hated me; even his dying depositions must be taken *cum grano salis*! Kenneth, you believe me?"

"I wish I could! Is it true or not that Enid Delaval was ever insane?"

"That cannot concern you; if you love me, let the subject drop."

"I cannot; I will not leave it until you have satisfied me on that point."

She was very white and she was very angry as she answered—

"She is as sane as you are at the present moment."

"Then why did you lie to me so foully? You knew that I loved her."

Cleo sprang to her feet like a fury.

"Yes, I knew that, but I loved you too; you were the only man who could ever touch my heart; I could kill any woman who came between us. She might have married where she pleased, if only she had not chosen you. I wanted her to marry—I hated her and her

pridish ways. She was like the woman, her mother, that all her father's people praised. As much as I loathed her, they loathed me; they never would receive me—then what cause had I to love her? She opposed me always. Kenneth, dear Kenneth! shall she come between us now when we are almost man and wife? Do you want to make a murderess of me?"

"You are mad to talk in such a fashion," he began, when she fell back white and breathless into her chair.

"Why do you say that? You frighten me; I have such a horror of madness. Ken! Ken! Ken! you do know all, then have mercy! I am a La Marchant—and I am afraid of the curse."

She was shivering as though with cold; all her beauty seemed to have fallen from her. He was angry and outraged, but he was sorry for her too, so he said—

"I will try not to reproach you too bitterly for what you have done. I place myself in your hands—what are you going to do?"

"I love you," she moaned. "I love you, and you have promised to make me your wife. I have dwelt upon that promise until—until—oh, Kenneth! Kenneth! cannot you guess what it is to me?"

"I guess what you wish to convey to my mind, and that is, under no circumstances will you grant me the freedom none other would deny."

She looked silently up at him.

"It is your written promise I hold, and I shall insist upon my rights. You only wish to rid yourself of me that you may marry Enid Delaval. But you are not rich. If I refuse my consent to your union, she loses everything she could otherwise claim, and then"—as her voice sank to the softest murmur—"then, you have loved me—you shall love me still. I am not mad; there is not the slightest touch of insanity in me. My mother used to say I was the only child in whom she could have pride. Oh! be kind to me now. Do not break my heart. Do not forget all that you are to me."

He stood apart; he could not take her in his arms and kiss away her bitter tears; he could only say, softly—

"You shall not say I have treated you dishonourably. I will keep my promise, but not at the given time. You must allow me a brief interval in which to become accustomed to the cruel facts just placed before me. I shall go away until the spring. When I return we will be married—although, heaven help us! it will be certain misery for both. I have neither esteem nor affection left for you now—I cannot feign either."

She fell gasping at his feet.

"Oh! you are angry with me now; but you will forgive me soon. I have been a wicked woman, but you will teach me goodness. I saw nothing but evil in my own home. Kenneth! Kenneth! for the love of Heaven speak kindly to me."

He took her in his strong arm, and, lifting her gently, placed her upon a couch.

"I will try to forgive," he said, "and to remember that you are a woman." With that he stopped, and just touching her brow with his lips, went out, leaving her to an anguish of pain and dread.

By the time Enid returned she had worked herself into a perfect frenzy. If Kenneth left her would he ever return? And what would people say when the postponement of her marriage was announced? Was she, the beautiful and popular Mrs. Delaval, to be made the butt for vulgar ridicule, all because of a pale-faced girl? As Enid entered she sprang to her feet.

"This is your doing!" she cried, furiously, the angry tears standing in her eyes. "Do not answer me. In some way or another you have wrought this mischief with the Forbes' assistance. I could kill you, girl. And he has gone! Do you hear? he has gone, in anger and scorn; and I feel he never, never will come back to me again, despite his promise."

She broke into a sort of fierce cry then, and Enid, who had never loved her, remembered now what taint was in her blood, thought of her wild, ungovernable love, and pitied her from the depths of her pure heart.

"I am most grieved," she began, when Cleo, lifting her hand, struck her sharply across the cheek, saying,—

"You hypocrite! I wish I could spoil your beauty. I wish you lay dead before me!"

Enid stood still a moment fighting with her natural anger and indignation, then she said, slowly,—

"I have wished for death often, but it does not come, only if it angers you to have me near, let me go away. Take all that should be mine, save the varied pittance. My life is too hard for me to bear." Her voice broke then; with an effort she steadied it and went on again: "We are not congenial to each other, and if I go, it may be you will win back your lost happiness."

"No," said Cleo, scornfully. "I am not so foolish as to let you roam about at your own pleasure. Whilst you are in my keeping, at least, you cannot lure him to your side. He is mine, I tell you, and I will never yield my claim."

The proud face—so pale, save for the scarlet marks of the cruel fingers—was bent fully upon her.

"It is yours to command, mine to obey; but from to-day I beg you at least to allow me separate apartments. Such insults as I have received are not easily forgotten;" and then she went away, Cleo following her retreating figure with vindictive eyes.

Day after day she brooded over her love and her grief, until her beauty took a less vivid cast, and people began to say that she was growing *passé*, and some who knew her origin whispered that her eyes had a strange look in them—like her father's—and then they fell to pitying Kenneth for having linked his lot to hers. The more malicious said he had evidently learned something of the truth and was wishful to draw out of his engagement, "because, you know, all the La Marchants are as mad as March hares."

Instinctively Cleo knew she was discussed in this fashion, and it made her desperate.

Oh! when would Kenneth return and she find rest in his presence and protection? She left Hanstanton, and securing a cottage by the Thames, took up her residence there, living very quietly, seeing scarcely any visitors, and Enid's life was dreary in the extreme.

The servants pitied her, but they only showed this by the added respect of their manner, for with all her gentle ways the girl fenced herself about with a dignity which permitted no familiarity. She bore uncomplainingly all Cleo's harshness, her uncooled hate. She even uttered no protest when all correspondence with Mathilde was prohibited.

"I am so used to pain," she wrote in her diary, "that a little more or less does not matter; and surely life cannot be worse than now it is. I try to hope for the dawn of a happier day—but it is weary work waiting."

The autumn dragged by, winter came. Cleo had written several appealing letters to Kenneth, urging him always to return, declaring her love with an utter abandonment of reserve and pride.

He answered her briefly and coldly. She had deceived him and ruined his life, he could not feel kindly towards her. And now spring came. Amongst themselves the servants whispered that "the mistress seemed strange in her manner, and that Miss Enid had best look to her own safety;" because now in her frequent and dreadful bursts of passion she uttered dark threats against the girl, and more than once she had been seen to strike her.

In April she wrote Kenneth,—

"The spring has come and I wait your return and the fulfilment of your promise."

## CHAPTER V.

DULY Kenneth's answer arrived.

"I will be with you in May," he said. "I leave it to you to fix the date of our marriage. I dare not promise you happiness, I do not hope for it myself; because I tell you plainly, there is but one woman on earth who has or ever will have my love. But I will do my duty by you; and if this contents you, we shall doubtless be as happy as most married people."

Cleo flung the letter to the ground. She was furious. Was all her love to go for nothing? Oh! if Enid were dead—if only for a little while Kenneth could be brought to forget her deception—surely he must love her once again! Was not she beautiful? She ran to a pier-glass, and, regarding herself with anxious eyes, saw that her beauty was waning. It had always been dependent upon its exquisite colouring. She beat her breast in a frenzy of despair.

"I am growing old," she wailed. "He will never return to me again. I have only my wealth to help me now."

Then once again she read his letter, kissing it wildly now, because, however cruel the words might be, Kenneth had written them.

Her reply to it was full of entreaties, reproaches and loving messages. She fixed the date of their wedding for the third of May, and began to add lavishly to her trousseau. But it was very noticeable that her manner was wholly changed from its former graciousness. She grew restless and irritable, and always the fear haunted her that at the eleventh hour Kenneth would fail her, and always her hatred of Enid increased.

The first of May came—not with blossoms and sunshine, but with north-easterly winds, cloudy skies, and trees but scantily garbed in delicate greenery—yet Enid was glad to escape into the garden which sloped down towards the river, not silver now, but leaden as the sea on a stormy day.

It had rained all the previous week, and the consequence was that she developed a cold, which grew so troublesome as the day went by that she retired early to her room, falling presently into a heavy sleep. Towards midnight she dreamed that her door slowly opened, and that she, breathless with terror, watched it moving with dreadful noiselessness; next a hand, white, soft and jewelled appeared, then a woman's figure draped wholly in white, and as she looked the face of Cleo shone from out a mist of falling golden hair.

In her right hand she held a dagger, a tiny jewelled dangerous toy she had purchased in Venice, from mere love of its demoniacal beauty.

Slowly, slowly she came towards the bed, and as slowly lifted her arm as though about to strike. In vain Enid implored in her vision for mercy. She saw the upraised arm, the glint of the steel, and with one superhuman effort screamed aloud.

That scream woke her. She started erect in her bed, panting with fear, and with sick horror saw Cleo standing over her as she had stood in her dream, and knew that the curse of the La Marchants was upon her.

With one wild cry she leaped to the floor, and rushed towards the door; but Cleo was too quick for her. She laughed aloud as she barred the girl's way.

"Why do you struggle?" she said; "you have often wished for death—it has come to you to-night!" and she tried to catch the slim white figure in her grasp; but Enid was too quick for her. Round and round the room they ran, the girl uttering most agonising shrieks for help; and at last a frightened group of servants ventured on the scene.

The footman was young, strong, and agile. Watching his opportunity, he sprang upon the poor mad creature, plucked the weapon from her, and, with the assistance of the butler, tied her wrists together with a silken scarf.

Then Enid emerged from her hiding-place

behind the curtains. She was white as ashes, and looked as though about to faint. But she said, as Cleo struggled madly with her captors,—

"Please, please be very gentle with her. I would not have her hurt."

Then one suggested a doctor should be summoned; but Enid answered,—

"Oh, wait a little, her violence will soon abate. Let us hide her awful affliction so far and so long as we may."

So all that night Cleo tossed and raved; but in the morning she fell asleep, and when she woke very late in the day her senses had returned to her, but she was cruelly exhausted. She looked down at her poor bound wrists, and said,—

"I know what has happened. The curse has come upon me. I don't remember what I did, it is all a blank; but I am sane now. You need not fear me any more;" and then Enid, bursting into tears, hastened to unfasten the bonds that held her.

"You are sorry for me," Cleo said apathetically. "I almost wonder at that."

The girl brought her food and drink, but she refused both. Then she begged permission to send for a doctor; but this too was negatived.

"No; I would like to keep my wretched secret as long as I can. It is the first time this has happened to me. I thought—oh, dear! Heaven!—I thought I had escaped. I shall not be dangerous again, at least, not yet. I know the signs and times so well. I have seen them so often. To-morrow was to have been my wedding-day—my wedding day; now I shall never marry again. Tell me what I did in my madness."

"No, no! not now; lie back, you are weak and ill, and must rest."

"You need say no more, My instincts were homicidal. I believe they were directed against you. And I have brought all this upon my most unhappy self. Long ago, when I was a mere girl I heard our family doctor say to my mother, 'If she will but restrain her violent passions I see no fear for her. She has the power to will; but, unfortunately, she does not exercise it.' I never did. All that I craved for I won by sheer persistency—I meant to make a wealthy match, and I succeeded. I learned to make your father's thoughts and wishes mine, and only because I wished to keep my ascendancy over him did I endeavour to control my evil temper. When he died my end was accomplished, and I did not care that you knew me for what I was—a La Marchant with all the La Marchants' worse traits and none of their redeeming virtues. I have always hated you. I do not think I hate you now, as you sit there so pale and still, with your eyes grown kind for me—for poor, miserable, despairing me! Enid! Enid! I have lost him—and with him my life must go—some one will tell him the awful truth, and then he may honourably claim his freedom. Why, oh! why, did I ever give myself over to this terrible passion of love?"

Enid tried to soothe her; with all heart she was deeply grieved for this beautiful, wretched creature; she even stooped and kissed the pale lips which had so rarely ever given her a word of kindness, and Cleo looked grateful. Presently she began to speak again.

"He will come to-morrow, but I shall not see him—oh! never any more. I cannot bear he should look upon the wreck of my old self. It must all seem absurd to you, that!—a woman so much his senior, and having such experience, should love him with all the strength of my heart; but, for all its absurdity, it is true—and, for his sake, I will try to bid good-bye to the brightest dream of my life."

"We will go away together," said Enid, gently, "only we must wait until you are a little stronger, and in the meantime we must let Mr. Barr know of our altered plans—that is only just."

"Will you go with me? No one need learn the truth away from England. Will you



promise on your honour not to place me under alien restraint, however violent I may be? What happened last night may never happen again—and I might have a trained nurse—or assistant?"

"I will do as you wish in all things."

"Then send at once for Kenneth; you will find his address in my davenport, and Robins can take your note. I know that Kenneth is at his chambers, and he will come at your bidding. You will see him, I cannot. You will tell him what has occurred, and say that he is free; that from to-night I wish him good-bye—I hope never to see him any more. Ask him to forgive me, if only because I am so wretched." And then she flung herself face downwards on her couch, weeping wildly for her fading beauty, her wasted hopes, and the terrible doom which threatened her.

All day long she alternated between fits of weeping, and wistful reminiscences of the past, and when at last Kenneth came she sent Enid down to him. No explanation was needed between them, the girl's note had told him as much as it was necessary he should know, and he felt a passionate pity for this woman who, but for Forbes' message, would already have been his wife.

He and Enid talked in quiet tones together in the pretty drawing-room, little thinking that Cleo had stolen quietly down, and, hidden by heavy curtains, was greedily drinking in their words.

"Now that I am a free man, Enid, what will you say to me?" Kenneth was asking. "I love you, I have always loved you, although for awhile that poor soul blinded me to my own deep passion."

(Continued on page 331.)

## PRETTY PENELOPE.

### CHAPTER XXXIII.

WALKING steadily up the dark avenues of Thicket Croft grounds, a man enveloped in a sensible rough ulster, and carrying a gladsome bag, arrived at the old fashioned entrance to find another man, younger than himself, smartly arrayed in immaculate evening dress, ringing lustily at the bell. A dog-cart was waiting for this young man, with a groom at the horse's head.

The last comer stopped abruptly and looked keenly at Dr. Gregory, for the young man in the evening dress was he.

"Can't make yourself heard, eh!" he inquired in a short curt way which belonged exclusively to Dr. Westall. "Everybody gone to this dance I suppose. Pull again, sharply!"

Philip Gregory obeyed, not without irritation.

"Everybody can't have gone," he observed testily. "Miss Desborough, I know, had no intention of going so in any case; and now that she has an invalid—"

"Someone ill?" Dr. Westall inquired quickly. "You can speak freely to me," he added, seeing Dr. Gregory's hesitation. "I am one of Miss Desborough's oldest friends, and I am a medical man into the bargain—my name is Westall."

The younger doctor immediately showed his appreciation of a name that was widely known throughout the medical world.

"We are of the same profession," he said, almost diffidently. "I too am a medical man, although only a humble individual at present; my name is Philip Gregory. I am glad to meet you, and doubly so on this occasion, as I shall refer, if you will allow me, to your superior knowledge, for instance, in this present case. I confess it has both puzzled and troubled me." He told of Marcia's accident, and then showed a packet he held in his hand, "I have driven into —," naming the nearest town, "for this, and thought on my way to the ball I would just run in with it myself and see

if I could do anything to relieve the excessive pain Mrs. Latimar complained of."

Dr. Westall said nothing, only gripped the handle of his bag more closely.

"Ring again," he said tersely, after a moment's silence, and then he gave a quick, short sigh, almost of relief, as the big door swung back, and Downs was revealed in the opening with all the evidence of being aroused suddenly from deep sleep.

Him Dr. Westall began questioning immediately. "Where were the servants? where was Miss Penelope? how came it the house was so deserted?" a dozen such queries.

Downs, of course, lost his temper.

"You wasn't expected, Miss Penelope said as you wasn't a comin'," he said surlily; but Dr. Westall took no notice of his ill temper. He cast off his coat and threw his hat to follow it.

"Come in, Dr. Gregory," he said; "as you are here we had better ascertain if Mrs. Latimar can see you"—then Dr. Westall stopped short.

"Hark! what was that?"

"I heard nothing!" the younger man said, a little startled by the sudden transition of manner. He came into the hall obediently. Dr. Westall stood listening, his brows contracted; then he turned to Downs swiftly, his face full of an expression it would have been difficult to describe.

"Where is your mistress? With Mrs. Latimar you say—yes; but what room—which floor?"

Downs, electrified by this curt questioning, gave the information required.

"Dr. Gregory, I shall be obliged if you will follow me," the older medical man said, quietly. He led the way to the broad staircase.

"Thank Heaven," he muttered, under his breath, "I decided to come after all to-night. Who shall say there is nothing in presentiment after all?" He paused an instant, and leaned forward once again.

A faint sound as of a woman's voice in pain came to the ears of both men. Uttering an inarticulate exclamation, Dr. Westall ran hurriedly up the stairs. Philip Gregory just behind him, his face filled with a look of vague alarm and anxiety. Dr. Westall's manner communicated this to him more eloquently than words; there was something, too, in the whole atmosphere of the quiet old house that seemed to speak of some unusual event—something almost mysterious.

The sound of the voice calling feebly for help guided their steps as they paused an instant on the first landing.

"This way," Dr. Westall said.

In another moment they were outside the door of the room Downs had told them was allotted to Mrs. Latimar. Dr. Westall gave that quick exclamation again as he tried to enter and the door resisted him.

"Looked!" he said, to himself; "is my fear going to turn out true?" Turning an instant to the young man beside him, he said: "Put your shoulder against this. We must break it in." Out loud he cried, in strong tones: "It is I, Penelope. I am here. Keep away from the door, child. We are breaking it in!"

A sharp crash followed on his words. As he recovered his breath and his senses after a momentary stagger when the door yielded suddenly, Philip Gregory looked quickly around him.

Dr. Westall had already grasped a feeble figure in his arms, and was holding it to his heart for an instant; then he had turned and put his burden into the arms of the house-keeper, Kate's mother, who, hearing of their arrival, had come quickly after them up the stairs.

"Take her away at once—at once," Dr. Westall said, as well as he could speak; then he put his hand on Philip Gregory's shoulder. "This is bad business, I am afraid," he said, "worse than I expected."

The dim light of the room had blinded his

eyes at first; but at these words Dr. Gregory glanced in the same direction as his companion, and he gave an involuntary shudder. Lying almost at their feet was a motionless body, the arms thrown out, the face gleaming white and set; by the fire-glow could be seen a dark stream of blood running from the lips, staining the delicate-coloured carpet.

"Turn up the light," Dr. Westall commanded.

He knelt beside Marcia and lifted her head with one hand, while he felt for her heart with the other.

"Dead?" asked the younger doctor, the full horror of the moment ringing in his voice.

The other shook his head.

"We are in the very nick of time," he said. "If we only had help! but we must do our best. I have foreseen this all along. Will you take orders from me?"

Dr. Gregory answered instantly and deferentially.

"Yes, sir," and the old doctor was pleased at his simple deference.

The next few minutes were devoted to trying every possible means to stop the flow of blood. Together they lifted the woman's form and laid it flat on the bed. They had worked in utter silence, except when the older man gave an order, but as this last was accomplished Dr. Westall spoke suddenly.

"We must have ice—otherwise—" he shook his head.

"My groom shall get some. I will go and—"

But Dr. Gregory was interrupted by the entrance of Kate—Kate, breathless, white, in tears, almost frantic.

"Oh! Dr. Westall, will you come, please? Miss Penelope will die. She looks awful. Oh! do come to her, sir, do come!"

Dr. Westall's manner was almost unduly harsh. He silenced the excited girl with a word.

"Miss Penelope will not die. She has fainted. Mrs. Latimar is much more likely to die if you don't do something to help her. Stop that noise and go and get some ice. I expect you have some in the house; if not, tell Dr. Gregory's groom to drive as quickly as he knows how to bring some. If all you servants had remembered your duty better, and had not gone gadding about and leaving your mistress all alone, none of this would have happened!"

Poor Kate's eyes filled with tears at this reproach. She had suffered most keenly as she had seen her mother bending over Penelope's prostrate form and had caught a glimpse of the white, still face. She had not the least idea of what Dr. Westall's words could mean beyond the fact that in some way Miss Penelope's illness was caused by being left alone with Mrs. Latimar.

However, sorrowful though she felt at the mere suggestion of having failed in her duty, Kate proved herself of great use to both doctors.

Ice was forthcoming immediately, and in a short while the medical men had the satisfaction of seeing success crown their efforts, although the danger and seriousness of the case was still very great.

Of his own free will Philip Gregory offered to remain at Thicket Croft all night. He dismissed his groom and settled himself by the bed where Marcia lay, to all intents and purposes a dead rather than a living creature.

"I will watch her," he said. "You will like to go to Miss Desborough!"

Whatever natural curiosity the young man may have felt, and, indeed, the circumstances were enough to arouse the least lively curiosity, he made no comment and asked no questions. His mind was infected, however, easily by the anxiety and trouble that was manifested by Dr. Westall, and the knowledge that the accident and agony Marcia had apparently endured in his presence only a few hours before was nothing but a myth, a deception for, guided by his desire, Dr. Westall had made a quick examination

of the supposed injured ankle and disclosed its soundness.

Dr. Gregory could not fail to gather some faint idea of the matter before him, and the fear the old doctor had expressed in his agitation and excitement on entering the house was almost fully explained.

It did not need many glances at Marcia's livid face to realize that there was something unusual—one might well-nigh say uncanny—about her, and the young man gave an involuntary shiver as he remembered the scene that had greeted them on forcing the door, and conjured up the possible mental agony Penelope must have gone through before they came.

Dr. Westall accepted his young colleague's offer to remain, with a curt word of thanks; but Philip Gregory by this time felt that he was almost an old acquaintance of the grim-spoken, tender-hearted, clever physician, and accepted his manner accordingly. It was with a feeling of security about Marcia for the moment that Dr. Westall sought his child's room and ministered to her.

The fainting fit was of unusual duration and he had time to sponge away a mass of congealed blood from the small right hand showing a jagged wound that he conjectured, and conjectured rightly, Marcia's sharp teeth had caused, before there came the faintest flutter of life from between the white lips, or a flicker of faintest movement in the closed eyelids. As the work of bathing, dressing, and bandaging the poor swollen and discoloured hand was nearly finished, however, there came a sigh that told of the soul's awakening from its merciful spell of oblivion; and as Dr. Westall bent tenderly over the beautiful face that bore such a look of anguish and terror and pain, the heavy fringed lids were lifted, and Penelope's blue eyes regained their sight and consciousness. The words that trembled on her lips were hushed into silence tenderly.

"You are not to talk yet, there is plenty of time. I am here, you see, so all is right now; please to open your lips and swallow this. No refusal, you know I never allow any patient to disobey me; drink it down, every drop!"

Weak as an infant, scarcely comprehending the extent of the relief that had come to her, Penelope obeyed. In a few moments, aided by Kate, the girl was wrapped in a comfortable dressing-gown and laid on her favourite couch, lost this time to sound and sight in a deep dreamless sleep.

"That will last some hours," Dr. Westall said to himself with satisfaction, as he stood looking down on the lovely young face. "Poor lamb," he added with a quick involuntary shudder, as his eyes fell again on the bandaged hand, "what an experience! what an awful thing to have happened to her! I dread to let her tell me all that took place, and yet it would be better for her to speak when she is able. Good Heavens!" mused on Dr. Westall as he paced to and fro, "What cunning the creature has had. How is it no one has seen, but me, this distinct trail of mania in her nature? It has been a hard matter for me to keep silence on this point and yet, again, it has been well-nigh impossible to speak what I have felt. When a person is mad right through, with no extenuating moments of sanity, then it is straight sailing; but with this woman! And yet," was the next thought, "sometimes I have felt that Denis Latimer was of my opinion; he never could have stood the perpetually repeating horror of those furious moods had he not told himself his wife—at least, at such times—was not to be dealt with as one would deal with a sane woman. The fulness of the danger Denis has never, of course, grasped for a single instant, otherwise he would have taken some means to have guarded others from the violence that was inevitable to a brain filled with homicidal intentions."

Dr. Westall stopped to look back again at the girl's motionless figure on the sofa; the faint regular breathing came to his

ears as pleasant as music to him, for he knew that the potent sedative had taken absolute effect; nevertheless he shook his head sadly and gravely.

"The result of this night's work will live with her for many and many a week to come," he said to himself. He knew almost without words the sort of scene Marcia must have indulged in, and, feeling certain now of her hatred to her cousin, the doctor allowed his imagination to sketch the worst picture possible. "If Denis could have only known this, how he would have worked every fibre in his being to keep these two apart. Where is Denis? Why is he not here? Surely he must have heard of her accident. He must know she is here under Penelope's roof. He cannot be at this dance; and yet why not? He may have gone in ignorance, or she may have used her cunning so well as to prevail on him to go; but no, I feel he would not have left her here alone. Well! Dr. Westall finished his communing with a short sigh, "poor lad! wherever he is, and whenever he comes, he will come to find a sorry story awaiting him. The future looks as black as the grave with this woman on his shoulders eating the very life out of him; for she will not go yet. There is tough stuff in her constitution, despite the local weaknesses. If her brain should become hopelessly diseased, who can say how long Marcia Latimer may not last? God forbid I should wish any living creature harm; but I should be glad, for many reasons, to know there was an end to this wretched woman, and the misery she will cause."

On his way out to join Dr. Gregory's watch, the old physician paused by Penelope's side an instant.

"At least," he said to himself, softly and tenderly, "she shall do you no more harm, my little one. If there is none other may have the right to guard and keep you in safety, then I will take upon myself that right. You shall never know such trouble again while life and strength are left me."

#### CHAPTER XXXIV.

The day after the Shire Hunt-ball was a sad and anxious one at Thicket Croft. Madge's trouble was only exceeded by her anger.

"I knew something would happen. I said so, didn't I, Daisy? and yet I must needs go off and enjoy myself and leave Pen to be killed by that awful—oh! yes, I know Marcia is very very ill; but I am not going to pretend to have any pity for her. She is bad as well as mad. Perhaps you have not seen the marks of her cruel teeth in Pen's hand."

Mrs. Warriner was little less distressed than her sister; but she had a quieter way of expressing her trouble.

"Dear Madge, don't judge until you know exactly every thing that has happened. It is true Pen's hand is hurt; but you don't know whether Marcia meant to—"

"Oh!" was all Miss Riley had to say; she was in a most unhappy frame of mind full of remorse and sorrow over Penelope's condition. The fact that Marcia lay dangerously, almost fatally ill, did not touch her in the very least; she only thought of Penelope and of the horrible scene she must have endured when she had been left alone with a woman mad with hatred and jealous passion.

Mrs. Warriner, not knowing and seeing so clearly as her sister, could not understand exactly what had happened; she felt it was her duty to reprove Madge.

"You really are too hasty in your judgment," she said; "You ought to wait and hear all that there is to hear before you condemn people in such a really shocking way. Poor Marcia Latimer is very ill, she has ruptured a blood-vessel; she may have—must have had great suffering. Did not Dr. Westall tell us she has had the most terrible pain at her heart? Do be a little charitable. It is

true Pen has hurt her hand; but what right have you to say Marcia gave her this hurt?"

Madge played with Dennis's ears in silence for a moment, and looked guiltily at her sister: "I don't know which is the biggest angel," she said, when she spoke, "you or Pen; you are both too sweet for human beings! I am the most earthly of earthly individuals."

"You are a silly goose!" her sister answered, with a smile; it was impossible to be angry long with Madge, she was so frank and honest in all her dealings.

Then Mrs. Warriner began to suggest the advisability of their leaving Thicket Croft at once.

Madge was not long in giving her decision:

"You may go, but I shall certainly not. What! go and leave Pen at this time! I must put out all my endeavours to try and cheer her up. Mrs. Roshdale will be here to-day, she can look after her beautiful daughter. Denis Latimer shows his good sense by remaining away from such a wife. I wonder where he is, Daisy, by the way. I feel something worse than usual happened between them yesterday, and that was why she came over here."

"But why, Madge? I don't see the force of that argument at all!"

"Because you don't know—"

Madge stopped abruptly; her quick thought immediately told her that she had nothing but surmise on which she had sketched the secret and story of Penelope's love and misery. To speak only from surmise, even to her sister, would be wrong. She finished her sentence by asking a question:

"Do you think one of us ought to go over to Lady Susan's?"

"I do, most certainly. Why not ride over? it will do you good. Pen will not be able to see us till the evening."

"I think I shall walk," Madge said, with a little confusion. She sprang to her feet, and her two dogs were immediately on the alert. "Look here, Daisy," she said, in her rough sort of way, "Mr. Da Burgh said something about coming to see Penelope to-day. If he should come, will you tell him where I have gone, and send him to meet me. I want to speak to him."

Dr. Westall was on the doorstep dismissing Philip Gregory with some few words of hearty gratitude and unfeigned thanks as Miss Riley prepared to start on her walk.

Dr. Westall had nothing but warmest praises for his younger colleague.

"Clever young chap. Got a heart to," he said to the girl. Madge was a favourite with Penelope's uncle George. "Don't know what I should have done without him last night—he helped to save that poor creature's life."

Madge said "Um!" in her driest tone. She was not in the least a wicked nature, but she had conceived nothing less than positive horror of Marcia, and all that appertained to her.

"Is she going to die—just yet?" she asked, quietly.

"I hope not," Dr. Westall said as quietly. He spoke earnestly. "You little brigand!" he added, with half a chuckle, as he caught Madge's expression. "I verily believe you would like me to give her a little shove and help her out of the world. Now, wouldn't you, eh?"

Madge shook her head violently at this.

"Heaven forbid I should have such vile thoughts. I don't want anything but what is right. Oaly, I can't be a humbug, and say I am sorry when I am not; and that is the truth, Dr. Westall."

"You shall not be a humbug as far as I am concerned. You are going over to Lady Susan's? Well, get back as soon as you can with Latimer's address. We must send to him. He ought to be here."

Left to himself after watching Madge's young, vigorous figure disappear into the distance, Dr. Westall paced up and down a few minutes with his hands behind his back and his brows contracted. He was almost as



much troubled and uneasy about Penelope's condition as about her cousin's. The girl was now awake from the long, deep sleep in which he had thrown her. And all the horror, agitation and excitement of the events of the night before seemed to have seized upon her shattered nerves. Her temperature was very high; the pain in her head was very bad. She was almost on the verge of a fever, and suffered intensely from the throbbing and burning of her lacerated hand.

It was her mental condition, however, even more than her bodily, that was causing Dr. Westall much anxiety now. He had not questioned her, or permitted her to give him a detailed account of what had happened, but from the disjointed words that fell from her lips he could gather to some extent the injury likely to be wrought on such a delicate, high-strung organization.

It was impossible to see, to understand everything in this moment. First of all he was eager to bring the girl's excited nerves and brains into something like their normal condition. He wished from the bottom of his heart that it had been possible to either remove Marcia from Thicket Croft or order Penelope away immediately from the scene of recent events.

Both these actions were impossible. Marcia might have to remain a prisoner to her bed for weeks. Penelope, he knew, would not obey him in this particular mandate, however docile he had formerly found her. All he could do was to make every arrangement for his power to work Penelope's mind into its proper condition, and to reduce the brain excitement and not to allow the fact of Marcia's continued presence to affect her more than was absolutely impossible to prevent.

It was a week later. The ball had become absolutely a thing of the past. The neighborhood had relapsed into its former condition of rural peace and quietness. Spring was breaking into being at every turn—the sunshine at noontide was almost hot—there was a little feathering of green painting the trees and hedges. Thicket Croft was gorgeous with its beds of crocuses gleaming in the sun. Inside the house the influence of spring revealed itself despite the presence of an invalid.

Mrs. Latimer had made an astonishing recovery; she possessed, as Dr. Westall had said to himself, a marvellous constitution. Despite the severance of blood, she seemed to have any amount of reserve force and vigour. At the end of this week she was allowed to sit up in bed, and informed her maid that in another ten days she would require all her things packed for a journey out of England.

"You will be satisfied at last you have got your way," she said, with her peculiar smile to Dr. Westall when he paid her his daily visit at this time. "I intend going south in a week's time."

It was almost the first words she had spoken gratuitously to the old doctor. She allowed him to attend her professionally, to question her and prescribe for her; but she gave him no thanks, and treated him with marked dislike and coldness. For Dr. Gregory she had some would-be pleasant speech, but unfortunately the young man had taken Madge's complaint very strongly—he had an almost uncontrollable aversion to the sick woman, and gave a sigh of relief every time he left her presence.

Dr. Westall had vouchsafed not the smallest notice to Marcia's rudeness; it was quite a matter of indifference to him whether she liked him or not. He gave her the full value of his professional talent, and went his way quite unconcerned by his patient's rude manner.

On this occasion, however, he broke his rule, and showed Mrs. Latimer that he did not intend to allow her or anyone to dispute his authority.

"Having waited so long for my satisfaction,

it will not trouble to wait a little longer," he said.

Marcia's brows gathered together ominously.

"If you mean by that, that you think you will prevent me—"

"Now"—Dr. Westall put his strong hand on her restless wrist—"now, Mrs. Latimer, you are going to listen to me. You are placed by your husband under my care. That being so, you will do nothing without my consent; and my consent to your going south, or indeed taking any journey for at least another three weeks or a month, you will certainly not get."

Marcia's face became livid and her eyes full of fury.

"You dare—" she was beginning, when Dr. Westall stood in front of her.

"I dare do much; you do not imagine how much. Silence, woman, I will not let you speak; nor shall you throw away the life Heaven has given you while I am here to prevent it. Be still, I say, and listen to me. You see, I am in earnest. I am your master, Marcia, you must obey me. If you refuse obedience, you will find your future contains something which has never entered your calculations as yet. Do not misunderstand me. I will have no putting aside of my words. I will allow no passions, no fury, unless you wish me to sign a document putting you into a lunatic asylum for the rest of your days."

Marcia lay back on her pillows, her face as white as the linen about her.

"Where is my husband?" she said; honestly, when she could find words. "Let him come here that he shall see how his wife is insulted and humiliated."

"Your husband is at Lattimer, as you know. You drove him from you by your vile words. If he were here he would only agree with what I say. Are you a sane woman?—is there a scrap of woman about you?" the doctor cried, letting his anger get the better of him for a moment. Then he relapsed into his usual manner.

"Remember, you are in my hands. How do you think the story of your conduct here with your cousin would read to the world if it were widely known? Be thankful that so far the knowledge of your horrible treatment of a sweet and gentle girl is confined to the few. Why, a dozen times over you could be committed to confinement as a dangerous maniac if it were publicly known what you tried to do."

Dr. Westall paused. Marcia made no answer. He felt her whole body thrilling with the growing fury and passion his words aroused.

He felt sick and weary of the woman suddenly; her nature was so terrible to him in its perversity of all things good, in its wealth of meanness and malice.

"Take yourself into your own hands, then, if you will," he said, abruptly. "I have told you that I cannot countenance any exertion for some time longer. If you persist in going contrary to my advice, you must bear with the consequences."

Marcia turned her eyes upon him slowly. "I hear; I understand!" she said, with her ghastly imitation of a smile. "I don't like you, Dr. Westall. You are a rude, objectionable man; but I believe you are clever, and are speaking the truth. Make your mind easy; I will not vacate my place for anyone just yet."

She paused a moment, and then turned to him swiftly: "But I shall go away from here. I won't stay in this house an hour longer than I can help."

"You are fit for no journey at all at the present moment," was Dr. Westall's answer, given very coldly.

Marcia was silent.

Dr. Westall remained another few moments in her room, walking to and fro.

"Am I to understand you intend to obey the instructions I have given you, Mrs. Latimer?" he asked, pausing beside her bed, and

looking down on her quietly, with dislike and yet with pity—she was such a lost, miserable object to him.

Marcia smiled.

"If I say no, what then?" she asked.

Dr. Westall answered her very quietly,—

"Then I telegraph at once to Denis Latimer, resigning the charge he has given me, and recommending him to summon certain doctors whom I shall name to come and attend you."

Marcia looked at him fixedly for a moment, and then, without a word, closed her eyes as though in deep sleep, so intimating she would pursue the discussion no further.

Dr. Westall paused only a little while, and then, with a shake of his head, walked out of the room.

He was weary of battling with this woman's strong will, of fighting down her cunning and her passion. Heated looking out at a window on the landing, seeing the glorious sunshine, the spring-decked gardens, in a dreamy way—his thoughts were not with his eyes. He was, in fact, hardly conscious of what lay beneath them.

It was impossible for him to review the circumstances of the moment in his usual calm clear-headed manner. His love for Penelope was too sincere, his friendship and sympathy for Denis Latimer too well founded, his repugnance to Marcia too great, to permit of this.

"If I could carry the child away," he said to himself, musingly, "if I could cut off all this miserable association. Heaven bless me, what a mischievous, light-headed, spiteful she used to be, a will of the wisp, with never a shadow on her thoughts, nor a pain in her heart save where her mother was concerned. What is to be the end of this all? Denis's life is wrecked, his fate is clear; but must my child's whole chance of happiness be wrecked also? It is very hard." The old doctor left the window slowly, and walked downstairs. "The worst is," he continued, thinking, "that not even time, the great healer, will be able to bring absolute cure. It may bring management, but not forgetfulness. Penelope is the sort of woman to love once and love always!"

He smiled at this juncture, for Penelope's slender figure had appeared from one of the rooms, and was waiting for him at the foot of the stairs.

The girl was very pale and very thin, with a troubled look in her beautiful eyes; her small hand was still bound up; she looked like one who had passed through a terrible experience, yet she smiled as she saw her old friend.

"Lady Susan is here, and wants you to prescribe for Spore, who has a bad cold and sore throat."

She slipped her hand through his arm as she spoke, and Dr. Westall pressed it close to his side.

"Have you made up your mind to do as I asked you, Pen?" he inquired, abruptly.

Penelope shook her head.

"To go away, dear Uncle George? I am afraid you will be disappointed, but—"

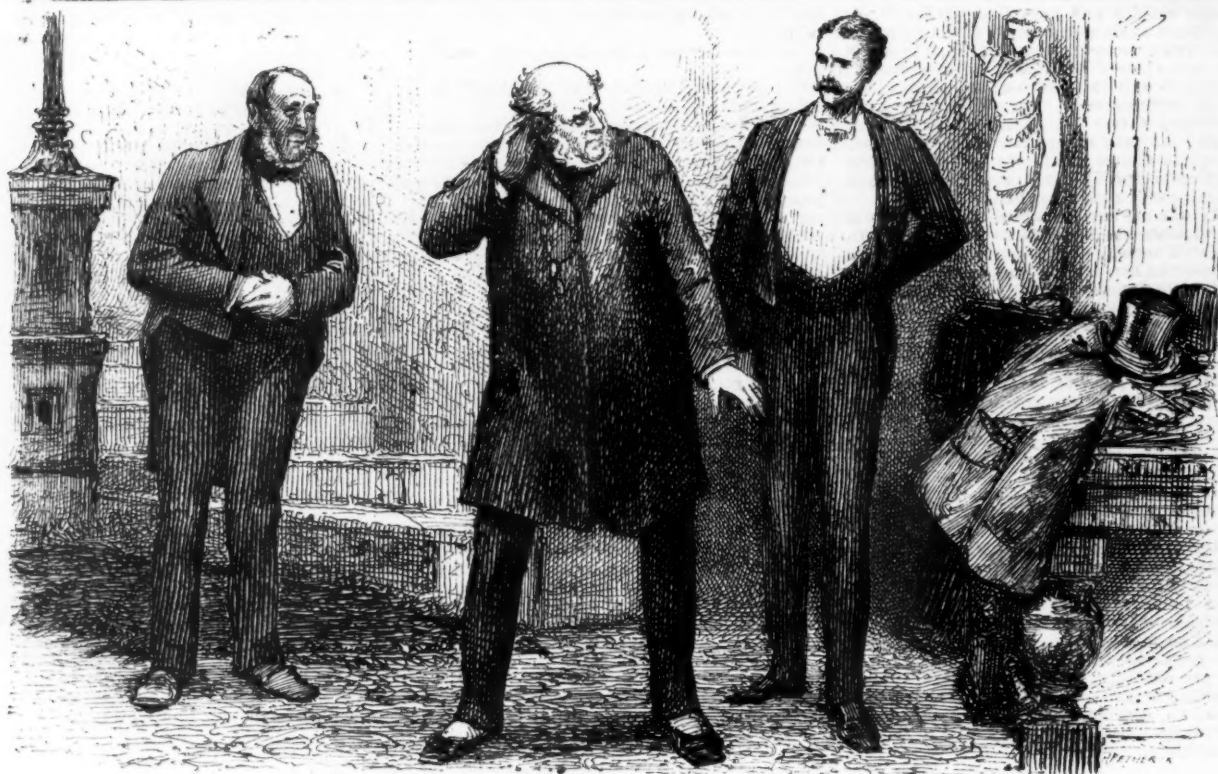
"But you would rather not, eh?"

"I do not see what good it will do me," Penelope answered. "I am not ill, you know, and—well, honestly, dear, I would rather stay here." She paused a moment. "Madge is going to remain on indefinitely. Mr. De Burgh is pleased she should do so, which is kind of him. Uncle George, you have not told me what you think of that engagement. I am so delighted about it, I am sure they will be very happy together."

Dr. Westall assented in a vague sort of way to this, but it was evident his thoughts were not on the subject of Harold de Burgh and Madge Riley. As they were approaching the room where Lady Susan was waiting for them, he stopped.

"Pen, you know there can be no question of her leaving here for another three weeks, perhaps a month."

Penelope's brows contracted, the very memory of Marcia was torture to her. The events of that horrible scene were blurred and



["HARK! WHAT WAS THAT?" SAID DR. WESTALL.]

not definite in this remembrance; but there was enough that was clear, and was exceeding mental pain. Terrible words of insult, of rage, of menace, that haunted Penelope day and night.

She was grateful to those who loved her and surrounded her, that they did not question her or make any comment; if even one of them, or one of the household had been so inclined, Dr. Westall's command, given most peremptorily and sternly, would have prevented them. Except with him, indeed, the name of her cousin and her enemy, who lay so ill in her house, did not pass Penelope's lips. Not even did her aunt, who had hastened to be with her daughter, speak of Marcia to the girl.

Mrs. Roobdale had indeed grown into a different woman since the moment of her arrival, when Dr. Westall had laid bare before her the miserable story of Marcia's worse than cruel conduct, and the results accruing from it.

The week that had passed since then had brought the keenest suffering to Penelope's aunt. She was mortified beyond words, shocked, frightened by all that had happened. She had not seen Denis, but there had come one letter from him—a short letter, whose very terseness betrayed his misery and his revolt against a continuation of the life he had led of late.

"My home is open to your daughter whenever she is able and chooses to return, but I beg you will inform her that from henceforth there can be no question of married life even in appearance between us; by her own act she has cut the tie that has hitherto held me to my duties—hard and almost impossible as the task has been sometimes. For the future I shall not reside a single day or hour under the same roof with the woman I am unfortunate enough to call my wife. So far as my possessions are concerned she is mistress for all that has been hers hitherto. Latimar Court is at her disposal, and the house in

town. Please convey my decision to her as soon as she is in a fit condition to hear it; and kindly signify to me what her movements will be. I shall remain at Latimar until I hear she is strong enough to return to the house, then I shall start for a sea voyage; probably I may make a tour of the world, and be absent for a year or more. My solicitors have full instructions to attend to all Mrs. Latimar's desires both now and in the future."

This letter Mrs. Roobdale had looked away in her dressing-bag, and as she sat watching by her daughter's bedside during the first and most serious hours of Marcia's illness, the poor woman's heart grew cold within her as she thought of the task Denis had commissioned her to perform and of the miserable life that stared her in the face. For with the shedding of her worldliness, of her selfishness and frivolity, the mother's heart and the latent good grew strong in Anne Roobdale's breast, and her duty stood out plain and definite before her. For good or ill she must remain with Marcia henceforth and share her life—the life she had so wantonly marred.

Penelope paused before she answered Dr. Westall's remark, but she found her voice at last; it was almost the first time Marcia had been mentioned between them.

"I know it, uncle George," she said gently. "I know she must remain. It makes no difference. I still would rather stay here."

"A wilful woman," Dr. Westall quoted but he did not look very stern, and he patted the little hand he held tenderly. He did not quite follow Penelope's mind on this point, but he did not press it. Lady Susan, however, was not so calmly disposed when she heard his verdict.

"Oh, my dear man, get the creature away somehow," the old lady declared almost excitedly. "I cannot bear to think she is under the same roof with Penelope."

This was said as Dr. Westall was taking

her to her carriage, and Penelope had left them.

"Do you think I want to keep her, my lady," the doctor said, grimly. "I should like to be seeing the back of her now, this very instant; but we must not do wrong, you know, the woman is not fit to be moved. I have told her so this morning. She has made a wonderful recovery; she has an extraordinary amount of vitality; but all the same she is not made of iron. Another attack of hæmorrhage just at this particular moment, and I would not give a snap of my fingers for her life."

Lady Susan said "Um" in a curious tone of voice, and it conveyed a great deal; but as she drove away, the dear old lady reproached herself and declared Dr. Westall was right.

"We must indeed neither do not think such wicked things," she said to herself. "The future does not lie in our hands, and if a human life is at stake, all other feelings must be sacrificed. Besides, if Marcia continues to improve in this rapid way, it cannot be more than two or three weeks longer before she can be removed—if I am wicked enough to wish it were in two or three days instead of weeks," Lady Susan added to herself quaintly. "Well I had better keep the fact to myself, especially as there is no possibility of my getting my wish!"

Dear kind Lady Susan would indeed have been pained and shocked could she have lifted the veil that shrouded the future and seen how near the realization of her wish was at hand.

(To be continued.)

"The thumb is an unerring index to the mind," said a professional manicure recently. "If a person is trying to deceive you, he will invariably draw his thumb in toward the palm. On the other hand, if he is telling the truth, the thumb will be relaxed and point away from the palm."





[HILDRED, TAKING COURAGE, LOOKED UP AT THE SPEAKER, AND SAW A TALL, GREY HAIRRED MAN BEFORE HER.]

## HILDRED ELSINORE.

## CHAPTER III.

Most families have some peculiarity marking them out from alien broods, but it is to be hoped that few boast as their hall-mark the special failing which distinguished the Elsinores—poverty. Nothing succeeded with them; no single member of the family had ever become rich or powerful. A few Elsinores just managed to pay their way, but this was a summit of good luck attained by few; for the most part they were a sorely struggling race who belonged to the ranks of the shabby genteel, and led very dreary lives, sadly lacking amusement or variety.

The Rev. Charles Elsinore represented the family in Leamshire, and possessed in a marked degree its special trait, since his income was under two hundred a year, and he had been imprudent enough to give several hostages to fortune in the shape of a wife and nine children.

There were actually nine young Elsinores living, without even reckoning the little graves in the churchyard. The parish was wont to regard those graves as a mercy, since without death's prying hand the Rector's income would have been yet more painfully strained.

Mrs. Elsinore was a good manager, and possessed a trifle—only that—of her own. She was a bustling, cheerful woman, with rather a loud voice, but she did her duty by her family and the parish; never wasted a moment, and tried hard to bring up her girls after her own model. With the eldest she signally failed.

Hildred Elsinore was a slight, dark haired girl, with dreamy, blue eyes; an intense love for music and books, a marked distaste for house work and cooking; and with, what poor Mrs. Elsinore looked on almost as a crime, a

romantic nature given to day dreams and castle-building.

"You'll never be worth your salt, Hildred," her mother said, sharply. "Why, here's Martha, more than two years younger, can keep house as well as I can; and you'd forget the store-room keys if I trusted you for a minute. I don't know what'll become of you. Your father can't leave you a fortune, and you'll never earn your bread."

The tears shone in Hildred's blue eyes. Her mother had not meant to be unkind, but she could not understand the girl's sensitive nature, to which a sharp word was like a blow. She thought her idle and inattentive, little guessing that poor Hildred was quite as anxious about the family difficulties as her mother, and would fain have put her shoulder to the wheel if she had only known how.

"What's the matter, Hildred?" The Rector of Little Netherpton looked up from the borrowed paper he was reading in his shabby study, to see his first-born standing before him with an anxious, pleading face.

"What is it, child?" and he pulled up one of the shabby leather chairs to the small fire, and made her sit down. "You don't often come to see me, Hildred."

The child—she was only eighteen—laid one hand lovingly on his shoulder.

"I think I should like to go away," she said, gravely. "Mother won't be home for an hour, and I came to talk to you about it."

"Go away?" the father's heart seemed to stand still, for this child was dearer to him than all the other eight. "Why, little girl, what makes you tired of the old nest?"

"I'm not tired, father—I love every stone of the Rectory—but I'm no use at home. Mother says I'm not worth my salt."

Mr. Elsinore sighed. "She has been a good mother to you, dear; you ought not to mind a few sharp words."

"But it's true," said Hildred, with a kind of choked sob, "I am not so much use in the house as one of the children, and I am the

eldest of all. I ought to be mother's right hand, as Martha is."

Mr. Elsinore uttered no word of blame, perhaps he understood poor Hildred better than his wife did, for he only said, gently,—

"We can't all be made alike, Hildred; maybe it would be a very dull world if we could. Martha is a good girl, but I find no fault, dear, that you are different."

"But I'm eighteen, and we are so poor; and I am no use at home, so that I ought to be doing something to earn money."

"Money is never plentiful with the Elsinores," replied the Rector, quietly; "and, Hildred child, I don't see how you could earn it, if you tried."

"There is my music, father. I haven't had many lessons, and I can't practise much, but I love music, and I know I have it in me to succeed if only I had the chance."

Charles Elsinore seemed to see another face rise before him as she spoke, to hear another voice take up her prayer; but he only said, gently,—

"You would not go on the stage, Hildred?"

"Oh, no; I should be frightened. But if I could go into a school, and have music lessons for my services, I should save mother the cost of my keep now, and perhaps, by and by, I should be earning money. I want you to think of it, dad."

"I will think of it, dear," he said, gently; "but I should miss you sorely, and though mother speaks sharply sometimes, she doesn't want to lose you, Hildred."

Hildred hesitated.

"She doesn't love me as she loves Martha and the others, dad—why is it? I am sure I try to please her; and I am the eldest. But Martha was always her mother's favourite."

Mr. Elsinore sighed.

"I did it for the best," he murmured, not troubling himself to explain things to Hildred. "I did it for the best."

"But you won't be angry," pleaded his daughter, "and you'll let me go?"

Mr. Elsinore looked very grave. "It may be best," he said, thoughtfully; "but, oh, child! I shall miss you sorely."

Hildred looked round the room: how worn and poverty-stricken it was! None of the furnishings had been renewed since the Rector came to Little Netherton seventeen years before.

The girl had an intense craving for things beautiful and artistic. She had never seen many such, but she yearned for them from the bottom of her heart.

To wear an ugly dress and clumsily made boots was a positive trial to Hildred Elsinore, and perhaps her happiest times were when she could creep away on a week day from the domestic bustle of the Rectory to the grand old church, and, sitting there unmolested in a corner, would listen to the organist as he practised, and watch the sun pouring in through the stained-glass windows at the east end, filling the place with warmth and light.

This was her greatest treat. She preferred it to the solemn tea-drinkings which were given at stated intervals by the richer parishioners, and to which Mrs. Elsinore always conducted her elder girls.

There were no resident gentry at Little Netherton; the Castle had been shut up ever since Hildred could remember. The doctor and the organist both lived four miles off in another parish. The chief of Mr. Elsinore's flock were well-to-do farmers, whose bustling practical wives found the Rector's helpmate a very congenial spirit.

They were far richer than Mrs. Elsinore; but they pursued from choice and long habit the same thrifty ways and small economies which were necessary to her, and at one of the heavy teas they gave from time to time, the favourite subject of conversation would be the price of butter and eggs, or the shortcomings of their various help-maids.

The farmers for the most part did not aspire to drawing-rooms. Festivities were carried on in the best parlour—most dreary apartments, all on one model—of which the chief features were slippery horsehair chairs, and a very shiny-covered table smelling strongly of beeswax and turpentine, and graced by a group of impossible wax flowers under a glass shade.

When Hildred left her father's study she went upstairs to the room she shared with Martha, for Mrs. Elsinore and her two eldest girls were invited to tea that afternoon at Farmer Gibson's, and great would be the mother's displeasure if they kept her waiting when she called for them after a round of parish visiting.

Martha, a rosy-cheeked, good tempered-looking damsel, was already fastening on her hat before the small mirror; she looked up as her sister came in.

"Do be quick, Dreda. Mother will be here in five minutes, and she hates waiting."

Martha wore her best winter dress of ruby-coloured merino, a black jacket and black straw hat with a gray wing.

She looked a wholesome healthy specimen of English girlhood, and was full of innocent exaltation over the pleasure she expected.

"It will be horrible," said Hildred, rather painfully, as she smoothed her soft hair. "Mrs. Gibson never talks of anything but servants."

"But she is so kind," said the younger sister. "She has promised me a new recipe for plum-cake which does not want eggs."

Hildred sighed. Martha's small economies galled her terribly.

"Aren't you going to put on your best dress?" asked Martha, anxiously.

"I tore it on Sunday, and have had no time to mend it. This must do."

It was a quiet grey homespun. She put a little black velvet bow at her throat, and a cluster of holly-berries in the front.

Martha looked on admiringly. No effort of hers would have produced the result achieved by one touch of Hildred's thin fingers, but she got on her sister's jacket and waited on her with kindly alacrity, making such haste that

the two girls were both in the hall before Mrs. Elsinore came in from her parochial duties.

It was April, and the trees were already in bud; but the cold had returned suddenly with intense force, and even thrifty folk like Mrs. Elsinore were obliged to countenance a return to fires, or her whole family would certainly have had bad colds, and cost her more in coals and doctoring them than the expense of coals.

The three had gone some distance when the mother suddenly discovered Hildred had come without her music.

"What were you thinking of, child? You know Mrs. Gibson likes to hear you, and the farmer himself is fond of a cheerful tune."

Hildred winced. The Gibsons' idea of music was noise. Anything less decided than "Rule Britannia" or "Yankee Doodle" was lost upon them.

Comic songs were their speciality, but Scotch reels ran these very close in favour; and to Hildred, who loved dreamy nocturnes and classical sonatas, to have to perform to such people was little short of a penance.

"No one else takes their music," she ventured; "it is so tiresome I expected to be asked to play."

"Well, and you always are asked?" returned Mrs. Elsinore. "It's the only thing you can do, and everyone knows it. Run back now for the music, and mind you bring something cheerful. The farmer won't give a thank-you for those dreamy things you are so fond of."

It was impossible to refuse, for Mrs. Elsinore ruled over her family with despotic sway.

Hildred turned back; her only consolation that her penance at the Manor Farm would be shortened by half an hour or so. Her mother called out to her to make haste, she could take the short cut across the Park, and then she would be at the Gibsons very soon.

The Park was a lovely place, quite the glory of Little Netherton, Netherton Castle, which stood within the beautiful enclosure, had never been occupied since the Elsinores lived at the Rectory.

The owner was an eccentric old nobleman, who had taken a dislike to the place at his wife's death, and forsaken it for over twenty years; still he could hardly be said to neglect his duties, since a very conscientious steward represented him, and his tenant's interests were well cared for.

The steward lived the other side of the Park at Great Netherton; he was a bachelor, and viewed very little, being almost as fond of solitude as his employer.

The place was beautifully kept up, both indoors and out. An old housekeeper and two underlings were always in charge, only the village missed the pleasant stir and bustle the residence among them of a wealthy family must have made.

The house, which ought to have been the leading power in the place, was a dead letter, and there were many people who wondered, like Hildred Elsinore, how any one could stay away from such a beautiful home.

To the girl's troubled heart, Netherton Castle had never looked so lovely as on this April afternoon. Biscuits cold though the wind was, the sky was clear and blue, and the rays of spring sunshine lit up the old grey pile and played slyly on the darkened windows.

"How I should like to get in there and see all over the house!" breathed Hildred, with a sigh. "I would much rather spend an evening wandering about these grand old rooms than sitting in Mrs. Gibson's best parlour listening to gossip."

"Have you never been over the Castle?" asked a voice at her side.

Hildred started. Although there was a public pathway across the Park, it was very little used. The villagers, as a rule, avoided the lonely, deserted spot, and strangers never came to Little Netherton.

For a moment the girl wondered whether one of the Castle's dead and gone masters had

come back to earth to haunt his old home. In another she grew braver, and dismissed the idea.

Taking courage, she looked up at the speaker, and saw a tall, grey-haired man watching her with a grave, thoughtful face. She had never seen him before, she was certain; but there did not seem anything so very alarming in his aspect, and when, with a smile, he repeated his question, she answered, simply,—

"No one goes over the Castle, Lord Netherton's orders are that no one is to be admitted, and old Mrs. Hill is very particular in carrying out his wishes."

"Perhaps he does not want to make the place a hunting ground for noisy sightseers," replied the stranger; "but surely he would have no objection to your going quietly over it while you are in the neighbourhood."

"I live here," answered Hildred. "I have lived here all my life; but I have never ventured to ask Mrs. Hill to let me see over the Castle."

"Then you are one of Mr. Elsinore's daughters?" returned the old gentleman. "I was just on my way to call on him; if you are going home we can walk together."

Alas! for her mother's commands, Hildred forgot all about the Gibsons, now probably gathered in the best parlour and waiting for her. She forgot the farmer and his taste for "lively" music, and walked towards home with this stranger as leisurely as though she were not expected at the Manor Farm.

"There are a good many of you, aren't there?" asked the old gentleman. "I think I've heard so."

"Nine living, and I am the eldest. We are all girls," confessed Hildred, sadly. "It is very hard on father."

The stranger smiled sadly.

"Girls are very precious to their parents sometimes," he said, gravely, "at least my daughter was to me. Will you pardon an old man's curiosity, Miss Elsinore, and tell me your Christian name?"

"Hildred," replied the girl. "Mother says it is very romantic and affected, but father loves the sound. He knew someone called by my name long ago."

They were at the Rectory now. Hildred, fearing the rough country servant might be busy with the children, opened the door, and begged her new acquaintance to enter.

"I am almost sure papa is at home. If you will sit down here, I will go and find him. Who shall I say is here?"

"Lord Netherton."

It seemed to Hildred she was past being surprised at anything. She had felt, from the moment of their meeting, the old gentleman was in some way mixed up with the Castle. She made no apology for the shabby drawing-room with its fireless grate. She only pushed open the study door, and going up to the sad, careworn figure by the writing-table, said gently,—

"Papa, Lord Netherton is here."

Charles Elsinore started. It seemed to his daughter that he trembled.

"The Earl must have heard something against me," he murmured, "but, indeed, I have done my best. Poverty makes a man aimless and dull. I meant to be a faithful minister. Has he come to demand an account of my stewardship?"

It flashed across Hildred's mind then she had heard Lord Netherton was the patron of the living. Her father had never seen him. The Earl had written and offered him the benefice, which, poor as it was, was a pleasant change from a dreary East-end curacy.

"He seems kind, papa, and I am sure you have done your best; please come and see him."

Face to face the wealthy nobleman who possessed—they said—more money than he could spend, and the needy clergyman, whose well-worn suit and bent shoulders showed a little how hard he had found life's battle; but for all his poverty, the Rector of Little



Netherton was a gentleman, and he greeted his patron with a simple dignity which sat well upon him.

"I am very pleased to welcome you, my lord. I had no idea you were in the neighbourhood."

"I am only here for a day or two. I took it into my head I should like to see the place where my happiest years were spent, once again before—the end. You have altered, Mr. Elsinore, since I saw you last."

"I had no idea I had ever had the pleasure of meeting you, Lord Netherton."

The peer smiled.

"I was at your wedding," he said, simply. "My daughter was living then, and nothing would please her but that I should take her to see her friend married. I don't suppose you even knew that we were there. You had no eyes for anyone but your bride. Your daughter's name tells me Mrs. Elsinore has not forgotten her girlhood's friend."

"Hildred," said her father quickly, "will you go and see about tea. I hope Lord Netherton will consent to take a cup with us;" then, as the door closed upon her, he said to his visitor, in a strangely troubled tone, "Her mother died when she was a weak old; but she does not know it. My second wife preferred to bring the child up entirely as her own."

"You were soon consoled," said the Earl, coldly, "for I hear your second daughter is sixteen. I should have thought you would have mourned such a sweet young creature as Hildred's mother more than a few months."

"I mourn her still," said Charles Elsinore, quietly; "my present wife is a good woman, but one loves only once."

"Then, why in the name of everything marry twice? Why, when my Hildred with her dying breath begged of me to give you this living, because her friend so loved the country, that friend was already dead and another woman in her place?"

"She saved my life," said Charles Elsinore, huskily, "and the child's too—my present wife. I mean, we were ill with low fever, caught in one of the pestilential courts about my East-end parish. She nursed us back to health. She was as lonely in her way as we were in ours. It seemed a wise step to take. I got your offer of this living on our wedding day."

"And the result of that wedding is—eight children!"

"They are good girls," said the Rector, sadly, "and their mother has brought them up properly."

"And is your first born happy," demanded the Earl, abruptly. "She looks to me too grave and quiet for eighteen."

"I think poverty tries Hildred more than any of the others," confessed Mr. Elsinore. "She has her mother's love for all things beautiful. She is my Lucy's image."

"I know. The moment I saw her I was reminded of the beautiful girl I had seen so often at my daughter's side;" then as an after thought, he added, "Did the parents never relent?"

"Never. The father died years ago, and Lady Tempest always hated me. She was an ambitious woman, and she wanted to see Lucy a peeress."

"She is dead herself now," replied Lord Netherton. "I knew she had left all her property to a stranger; but I hoped she might have done something for Lucy in her life-time."

Hildred was heard returning. Her father flashed one glance of entreaty at the Earl. "Trust me," said the old gentleman, warmly. "I will keep your secret, for Lucy's sake."

Hildred came in with the tea-tray in her hands, and she spread the table with dainty care, making the plain fare and unlovely crockery look almost inviting by her deft fingers.

The Earl watched her narrowly. Her mother had been his godchild and the close

companion of his only daughter; she herself was that daughter's namesake.

"My dear," said the Rector, suddenly, as Hildred handed Lord Netherton a second cup, "the house seems very quiet. Where are the children?"

"Maria has taken the little ones for a walk; the girls are busy with their lessons; mother and Martha are at the Gibsons."

"Waken't you going too?"

She opened her blue eyes.

"I forgot all about it; mother sent me for my music. Well, it's too late to be sorry now, and I had so much rather stay at home."

The Earl glanced at her. They had finished tea, and were standing in a little group by the window, watching the last rays of the setting sun sink in the west.

"I am very fond of music. Will you sing something to please an old man, my dear?"

She went to the shabby piano and opened it.

"Do you know any Scotch songs? I like those best."

And she sang, "Ye Bonny Doon," and "In Silk Attire,"—sang them with such feeling and expression that the tears stood in the old lord's eyes.

"Thank you, my dear," he said, when she had finished; "you have given me a great deal of pleasure, and I shall take away one happy recollection of my last visit to Netherton. You have my daughter's name; may you have a longer life than Heaven granted her."

"Papa," asked Hildred, when they were left alone, "is it true?"

"It is quite true, my dear; that you were christened after Lady Hildred Carr; but I would rather you did not mention the subject before your mother, she hates to hear it spoken of."

"Well," said Mrs. Elsinore, when about half-past eight she and Martha returned, "I wonder you are not ashamed of yourself, Hildred, to keep us waiting for our tea till the cakes were spoilt, and then never come at all. Mrs. Gibson is in a fine taking."

"It was my fault, mother," said the Rector. "A visitor came to tea, and as Maria was out with the children, I asked Hildred to see to things."

"A visitor, indeed," groaned Mrs. Elsinore. "Some poor body from the village knew I was out, and seized the chance of getting something out of you."

"He didn't get anything but a cup of tea. Dreda sang to him afterwards."

"Who was it?"

"Lord Netherton."

"Charles! are you mad?"

Hildred had vanished, leaving her father to fight her battles. The Rector smiled at his wife's bewilderment.

"No, my dear, it's quite true. It seems the Earl got a fancy to come and look at the Castle, and meaning Hildred in the park, he asked if I was at home."

"Oh!" and there was a world of regret in the poor woman's voice. "Charles, he has five other livings in his gift—all of them better than this. Did you say a word?"

"No," confessed the Rector; "I never thought of it."

Poor woman! Was there ever such a trying husband?

"At least you told him how the tilth had gone down, and how badly the organ wants repairing?"

Mr. Elsinore shook his head.

"I asked him for nothing," he admitted. "We talked together like two friends; he charmed me into forgetting that he was rich and I was poor."

"Charles," cried his wife, fairly distracted, "you may be a good man, but I do believe you are an idiot!"

The Rector of Little Netherton took no offence at this scathing reproof. Perhaps he felt from his wife's point of view it was deserved; he only said—

"The Earl seemed taken with Hildred's

singing. He says his only daughter was a Hildred, too."

He did not confide all things to his second wife. She had not the faintest idea that her predecessor had been a millionaire's daughter, and so intimate with Lady Hildred Carr that she named her baby after her.

"Well," said Mrs. Elsinore, after a long pause, "of course it is my duty to pay my respects to the Earl, and apologise for my absence when he called; I shall go up to the Castle directly after breakfast to-morrow, and perhaps I can repair your carelessness."

The Rector groaned. He would rather have borne his poverty than begged of Lord Netherton; but he was too fond of peace to dispute his wife's intention.

As it happened, however, he need not have been uneasy; when Mrs. Elsinore reached the Castle the next day, soon after nine o'clock, it was to be told that the Earl had started nearly an hour before for London.

"His lordship told me, ma'am, at any time you or the young ladies wished you were welcome to see over the Castle," said Mrs. Hill, civilly; but this was no compensation to Mrs. Elsinore for her failure to see the great man, and she went home in such a temper that even her favourite Martha was quite unable to do anything to please her; while poor Hildred wished more than ever to go away and seek her fortune, since she seemed hopelessly in disgrace.

#### CHAPTER IV.

Mrs. Robson sat in her front parlour one September day in what other people would have called a brown study, but which she more simply styled "a bit of a bother."

It was not like the busy, active widow to be doing nothing at twelve o'clock in the day. Neither was it her wont to take up her abode in the parlour even when, as was the case at present, a card in the window proclaimed that it was "to let"; but the landlady was worried.

Below stairs she would have been reminded, by the sight of her machines and other trade appliances, of her neglected dress-making; here she could sit down with her hands before her and "think it out."

She was not a highly educated woman, but she had sharp wits, and she had seen a good deal in her husband's time, of the seamy side of life, so that she could put two and two together as well as most people.

"It's no use anyone talking," she decided at last, unconsciously speaking her thoughts aloud in her excitement; "I'm quite sure there was something wrong about Mr. Mainland. He had queer ways from the first, and there was nothing much queerer than his way of taking himself off. It's all very well for Nan to say 'Wait a bit; I've waited over three weeks, and I can't afford to keep the rooms empty any longer. I've got my living to think about, and I'm sure I've a right to do the best I can for myself. What troubles me most is that Nan should go against me. She hardly spoke to the young fellow while he was here; why should she take up his case now?'"

A loud double knock at the door roused Mrs. Robson from her reflections. She went and opened it herself, feeling sure it was either a customer about a dress or some one to see the rooms.

"Ah, Mrs. Robson, good morning," said the cheerful voice of Dr. Tucker. "I saw the card in the window, and came in to ask if the rooms were to be had."

He followed her into the little parlour and sat down. It was by no means the first time he had been there, for more than one of his assistants had lodged at No. 89 and it struck him at once either that Mrs. Robson had made sundry purchases, or that she was taking charge of some goods for a former inmate. A handsome oak stationery case stood on the table, a revolving office chair, a book-slide well-stocked with such volumes as would have

been far above Mrs. Robson's intelligence, all struck him as new.

There was a strange delay in the widow's answer, and glancing at her he noticed for the first time that she looked troubled and anxious.

"Anything the matter?" he asked, kindly. "Doesn't the dress-making answer, or has Nan been coughing?"

He had attended Nan ever since her childhood, and was privately surprised she had lived to grow up, so delicate had he once considered her. A kind-hearted man, he felt a real interest in the honest, industrious widow, and showed it.

"Oh, sir," said Mrs. Robson, in a flurried, nervous way, "I feel bothered to death. If only you'd a few minutes to spare, and I might tell you everything, I'd be grateful. There's never such a thing happened to me before, and I feel clean daft."

"Come, come," returned the doctor, "keep up your spirits. I've nowhere to go before lunch particular, and so I can spare you half-an-hour; but if the trouble is a defaulting lodger, I think a lawyer would be your best adviser."

"I'd rather speak to you, sir, because you've seen him. You may remember, Dr. Tucker, calling here in June, when I'd just let the rooms, and I pointed Mr. Maitland out to you as he went down the street?"

"I remember I just caught sight of a good-looking young fellow with rather an aristocratic air, but I should not know him again. Well, what's wrong? did he abscond with your best ornaments, or run away in debt?"

"Neither, please, sir," said the widow, in an awestruck tone, "but he's clean gone."

Dr. Tucker started.

"I don't understand," he said, kindly. "Keep as cool as you can, and tell me everything just as it happened."

"I never knew nothing about Mr. Maitland," confessed Mrs. Robson. "He paid his rent regular to the day, but sometimes I fancied he had a trouble to do it. There were trinkets he'd have one day that'd be gone the next; but I must say he was quite the gentleman, and I've no cause of complaint."

Dr. Tucker did not hurry her. He understood she must tell her story her own way or not at all.

"Just three weeks ago, sir, Mr. Maitland called me in here. He sat in the very chair you're in now, doctor, and he said he was going out for the day, and shouldn't be home till late. I marvelled at his troubling to tell me, for he never did come in early—unless it was early the next morning with the milk. The table was strewn with gold and silver. Of course, I didn't count it, but I should say there was over thirty sovereigns. He took up two of them, quite pleasantly, and gave them to me for the rent. He wouldn't let me send for change then—said the next morning would do. Half-an-hour later he went out with a small black bag, the same as lawyers carry, in his hand."

"And what happened next?" asked Dr. Tucker, finding she had come to a dead stop, and seemed unable to go on.

"Nothing, sir."

"But—"

"I expected him day after day, doctor, till I declare I felt quite ill with worry. When he'd been gone a week I just looked through his things; the chest of drawers in his bedroom and that case," pointing to the one on the table. "I thought there'd be some address I could write to."

"And didn't you find one?"

"I found not a single scrap of writing, except that his name is in all those books you see there. His clothes was in perfect order; he'd plenty, and he always wore the best of everything. That case there is stocked with paper of every kind, but it's all clean and ready for use. Mr. Maitland had just vanished."

Dr. Tucker felt perplexed. If the absentee

had been in his landlady's debt, it would have been easier to understand.

"Oh, no, sir," she said, frankly, when he asked. "There was fifteen shillings change I had to give him, and he owes nothing in the neighbourhood, for he never went into the shops here. He left the whole of his wardrobe, and a good one too, and that chair, and all his books, and there's a dressing-case with silver fittings in his bedroom that must have cost a pretty penny."

The doctor looked at Mrs. Robson with a face nearly as perplexed as her own.

"Had he any enemies?"

"I don't know; no one ever came here to see him. I shouldn't think he was the sort of gentleman to have enemies—a civil, pleasant-spoken young man as I ever saw."

"Well," said the doctor, cheerfully, "you can't be expected to keep your rooms vacant indefinitely. In your place I should pack up Mr. Maitland's possessions and move them into the rooms you occupy yourself; then, even if he should return, he can make no complaint."

"That's what I think, sir. Nan, she calls me unfeeling, and says Mr. Maitland may have been detained on business, and that he is sure to come back."

"Well, if he's detained on business ever so, he might have telegraphed," said the doctor, gravely; "and in any case he would want clothes. I tell you frankly, Mrs. Robson, I don't believe you will ever hear of him again."

"Why not?"

The voice was not Mrs. Robson's. Nan had come home while they were talking, and stolen into the parlour in time to catch Dr. Tucker's last words.

He started as he looked at her—never had he seen her so lovely. Her eyes gleamed like stars, and two feverish, crimson spots burned in her pale cheeks.

"You wrong him!" she cried, harshly. "Mr. Maitland said he would come back, and he will keep his word."

The truth came to them both then. Mother and doctor knew Nan's secret. To her, Claude Maitland was not a mere lodger, but the man she loved.

"My poor child," said the doctor, feelingly, "I have no wish to speak against Mr. Maitland. He may have been prevented by illness from returning; he may have met with foul play."

"Ah!" Nan interrupted him, "foul play!—that is it. His false friend has killed him. Oh, Claude! why did I send you on that fatal journey? Oh, Claude, my love! forgive me!"

She fell senseless at the doctor's feet; and, as he raised her tenderly in his strong, kind arms, he felt that the shadow of a worse trouble than her lodger's disappearance rested on Mrs. Robson's home. Her daughter knew more of Claude Maitland's private history than anyone else; and this fragile, beautiful girl was involved in his secrets. Unless they could find her lover and bring him back to her, the doctor trembled for Nan's life and reason.

(To be continued.)

THE Red Indian who is persuaded to wear shoes or boots is the easiest man to fit imaginable. This is because nearly every Indian is flat-footed, to use a favourite expression of athletic circles. Hence in fitting a semi-civilised redskin all that is necessary is to find a shoe that will go on easily, whereas with a white man it is necessary to take into consideration the expansion caused when he presses down his foot and raises either heel or toe. The peculiar gait of the Indian is the result of the way he puts his foot down perfectly flat and lifts it up again all at once, as it were. An Indian can often run very rapidly, but he never runs gracefully, because he never acquires the spring which the athlete obtains by keeping his heels off the ground and running on his toes.

## WRITTEN IN SAND.

### CHAPTER X.—(continued.)

"Poor girl!" thought Hampden, "it will break the monotony. It must be monotonous to pass one's life in the society of a person one does not love in the least."

In spite of the careful way in which the Hampdens veiled from the world's eyes the nature of their relations to one another, something of the true state of the case leaked out, owing, probably, in the first instance, to the gossip of servants; with the tendency of every unpleasant scrap of little-tattle to grow, it came at length to be whispered that the Hampdens didn't "get on."

Mrs. Kilbliss, an old acquaintance of Henry Hampden's, to whom, indeed, she had yearned to stand in the position of mother-in-law, was secretly gratified that his life with the woman he had blindly chosen in preference to her Augusta should not be altogether successful. She took a keener interest in Liora than in any other of her acquaintances, and to discover flaws in Augusta's successful rival became an all important business with her.

It happened that the last joined sub, in Captain Lancelot's regiment was "sweet" on her youngest daughter, and through him she became acquainted with the story of Liora's love for Jack Lancelot: it was nuts and cakes to her.

One morning, when Liora had been away about a fortnight, Mrs. Kilbliss presented herself at the office of Hampden and Calthorpe, and requested a few minutes' private conversation with the former.

"I have come to give you some information you won't thank me for," she began; "but I have not come for thanks, I have come because I am your friend, and I felt it to be my duty to tell you this. Of course, if you already know it, I have nothing more to say." She paused for a minute in order that she might spring her mine with greater effect. "Your wife is at Nice still?" she went on.

"My wife is at Nice still, feeling much better, she tells me, and enjoying herself in a quiet way, of course," he said.

"Of course," repeated Mrs. Kilbliss, "Captain Lancelot is at Monte Carlo just now," she added, in a casual sort of way.

"Indeed," said Hampden, "Yes, I think he mentioned to me that he was going."

"You knew he was going? Oh, then I suppose it's all right."

"What is all right?" said Hampden, wholly puzzled as yet to find out the drift of the woman's remarks.

"It is a mere coincidence their being there at the same time," she answered. "Of course, the least thing makes people talk."

Nobody had talked except in the friendly lady's lively imagination.

"What do you mean?" he asked, sternly, but still completely in the dark.

"Nothing."

"Nothing? Is it nothing that you intimate that Captain Lancelot is at Monte Carlo because my wife is at Nice?"

"I have said it is a coincidence. Your knowledge of the circumstance proves it. I have this answer ready for any one who may mention it. I am so glad when I can set the tongue of gossip at rest."

"In this case the duty is mine," replied Hampden angrily, roused at last to understand the significance of the woman's words. "You will refer all maligners to me, Mrs. Kilbliss."

"And you are not angry with me?" she put in. "I have come as your friend."

"Friend or enemy, no one shall speak evil of Liora. She is as single-minded and as pure—no, I won't defend her. Defence presupposes a necessity for it. There is no necessity to defend my wife."

"You will get her to come home, though?"

"I shall certainly do nothing of the kind."



To do so would be to give colour to these falsehoods. Why, the idea is preposterous in the face of facts. Captain Lancelot! I don't believe she has spoken to him above half a dozen times. He has been a guest at our house by my invitation, and will be again, I hope. She only met him a few weeks ago."

"It was odd his being quartered where she was—married."

"What is there odd about it?"

"Well, don't you think so yourself?"

Mrs. Kilbless smiled.

"It is romantic almost, their meeting again after so many years. I wonder you weren't jealous."

"Why should I be?" asked Hampden. His mind was slowly grasping an idea that had just dawned in it. "Why should I be?"

"Well, upon my word!" she said, with an affection of hearty goodwill, jumping up from her seat. "Most men would be jealous of the former lovers of their wives. Though I believe there never was any actual engagement." Again she paused.

"If this is what you came to tell me you might have saved yourself the trouble, for I knew it. I thank you for thinking of my interests, and I must beg of you to excuse me. I have an appointment at twelve o'clock," glancing at the neat marble timepiece on the mantelshelf. He opened the door of the private office in which he had received her, and when her burly form was out of sight he closed it again, and turned the key. Stumbling to the nearest chair he sank into it, letting his head fall upon his hands. "Oh, Heaven!" he said, hoarsely, "what does it mean?"

Like one that gropes in black darkness and sees no deliverance, he remained there crouched up like an old man till the clock struck twelve. The business habits of a lifetime came to his rescue.

"I have an appointment at twelve o'clock," was the one clear thought in his whirling brain.

He rose like a man in a dream, and mechanically put on his hat and coat and went out.

One of his clerks, whom he had not seen that morning, met him on the stairs with a respectful "Good-day, sir!" Usually gracious to the last degree to everyone in his employ down to the charwoman who cleaned the offices, he now passed by his clerk without a word or a sign of recognition, which made the young man apprehensive for his further employment, and caused him to make an erroneous entry in a ledger that day.

Out into the street Henry Hampden passed seeing no one, hearing nothing but those mocking words: "It is a mere coincidence their being there at the same time."

So this was the man she had loved—nay, she still loved him—the man whose memory had come between him and his heart's desire, whose presence threatened now to blight his whole existence, to blot his good name—no, not that, if he could help it.

Perhaps it might not be too late yet to save her. They were there together by mutual agreement of course.

Had the force of old associations, the passion she felt for Lancelot, of which she had told him on that terrible night on the sands at Portrush, overcome her sense of right and prudence by this time?

Was there still time to snatch the brand from the burning, or was she—

"Hi, there! Look out! whoa—oh—oh!"

A sound of a horse plunging wildly—a shriek from a spectator—a dull thud—a sudden rushing as the passers-by swept towards the spot learn the extent of the disaster.

"Now, then, keep back there and give him air!" cried the voice of authority in the person of a policeman who bent down to examine the prostrate form of the victim from a wound in whose head blood was flowing copiously.

Henry Hampden was well known in the city, of course, and the victim was identified almost immediately, and then everybody, who had seen the accident, and those who hadn't

but who possessed tongues and imaginations, poured out a version of how it happened.

It was after all not much matter now it happened. Everyone agreed, however, that it wasn't the fault of the van-driver, who stood by looking soiled and miserable, not knowing but that this might mean ruin for him.

He had shouted loudly—several people had heard him—he had pulled up with the utmost alacrity.

The horse was a ticklish brute, and commenced rearing and plunging. The gentleman wouldn't see nor hear, and if it hadn't been that the driver managed to make the horse swerve to one side he would have been run right over.

Something—the shaft or one of the horse's hoofs, or the wheel, nobody could tell which—had struck him a telling blow on the head.

Then a doctor came along, and the crowd bent forward to hear the verdict.

"He's alive," he said, and the curious onlookers fell back, perhaps morbidly disappointed.

"He is —?" whispered Liora, with blanched lips when the door was open to her on her arrival two days later. "He is —?" She couldn't finish the question. A doctor stepped forward to meet her.

"We have hopes, with care."

She looked at him with great hollow eyes, and in silence she passed up the staircase and went straight to the sick-room.

A woman wearing a white cap and apron sat in an arm-chair by the bedside.

"You are the nurse?" said Liora to her.

"Yes, ma'am," she said, rising, knowing from the very way Liora had entered the room that she was the mistress of the house.

"I am the day nurse," she explained.

"You can go, then," said Liora, quietly slipping into the vacant chair and waving her hand towards the door. "You can go. I am the day-nurse and the night-nurse too."

## CHAPTER XI.

ALL through the weary days that followed Liora never left her husband's room.

Even when the night-nurse, who, by absolute command of the doctors, was retained, took her turn at watching, Liora could only be induced to lie down for an hour or two on the sofa in the sick-room. If through sheer exhaustion sleep got the better of her, it was an uneasy sleep from which she awoke every few minutes, starting up with an anxious glance towards the sufferer.

He was perfectly unconscious; he did not even rave as in delirium when the brain is still active, though the activity run in unnatural channels. The blow which had stunned him physically seemed to have stunned all his faculties. The feeble pulse that beat was all that showed that the motionless form on the bed still lived.

"Can nothing be done?" was Liora's oft-repeated question, as morning after morning brought no change in his condition.

"Things must take their course," the doctors told her. "The low fever must burn itself out. The only thing is to keep up the vitality with nourishment."

They did not tell her what they dreaded rather than death as the ultimate result of the illness, namely, that his mind would be affected. It scarcely seemed possible that after such a period of absolute darkness the full light would ever shine again.

Towards the end of the third week the crisis of the disease was anticipated, and Liora became more than ever assiduous in her watch. She refused to take any rest whatever; she sat by the bedside, motionless herself, never taking her eyes off the motionless form of her husband, and only stirring to administer the necessary nourishment at specified times.

She was watching for that quiet sleep which the doctors said would come, the sleep

that would have far more of life in it than this torpid condition in which not even the breathing was audible. If that life-giving, life-meaning sleep did not come, then the end would be death—one or the other, Liora knew.

One evening the change came. She was alone with him. It was not yet the hour for the nurse's presence. There was a movement of the limbs that had been still for so long, a movement of the muscles of the face and an evident desire for a change of position.

Gently, as if he had been a child, Liora assisted the weak body to move, and propped it up with pillows, then she bent down her head and listened.

At first faintly and with fluttering uncertainty, gradually becoming more regular, more certain, she heard the sound of the breathing that signified life, and in the first moments of the assurance of his safety her senses, so long under a severe strain, became dull and incapable of feeling either joy or thankfulness.

When the full meaning of the change came to her, she slipped down on her knees and hid the sob that broke from her in the folds of the bedclothes, and a prayer of thanksgiving went up from her heart—a prayer not spoken in human words, or in thoughts that have words for their framework, but in the dumb silent language which finds its utterance oftener in tears. When she grew calm again she rose and stooped over him.

How worn the features were, how dark the hollows about the eyes. The fever with its false show of strength was over, and now the physical weakness became the more apparent. Herein lay all the danger now, but somehow Liora did not fear it; instinct told her that he was safe, that other and greater danger she did not suspect.

And looking back on the days of terror that were past, she realized that in them she had found a joy which also was past, alas! In his unconscious state she had fancied him altogether hers: as a helpless infant seems to belong wholly to the mother. And as a mother will fondle her sleeping child, and will press her kisses on its unconscious brow, so she had lavished all the affection that was pent up in her woman's heart on her senseless husband, and had pressed her warm lips to his unresponsive ones with a secret delight.

Now all this must cease, and she must go back to her old position of a woman with whom he spent a few leisure hours in each day, with whom he was on terms of pleasant acquaintanceship, unless, indeed, he could see for himself what her womanly pride would only let her reveal by little studied acts of kindness, and what she herself had come to learn was the truth—that she loved him.

She sat awhile thinking, and silent tears coursed down her pale cheeks. Remembering that it was almost time for the nurse to come into the room, and that one of the doctors was expected; she rose suddenly and pressed her loving lips to his forehead.

"It is for the last time," she thought, and she kissed him again and again till he stirred under the passionate touch. She started back alarmed at her own thoughtlessness; above all things, that natural life-giving sleep was not to be disturbed, the doctors had said. She watched in agonised terror till he grew quiet once more.

"It's all over," she sighed. "I'm nothing to you now, we are only acquaintances," and then the nurse came in. When the doctor arrived and saw that his patient's life was out of danger, he insisted that Liora should regard her own need for rest.

"If you stay up an hour longer I shall have two patients in this house to-morrow, that's certain," he said. "You must go to bed at once—not here on the sofa, where you're always on the watch. You have nothing to fear; his life is safe now, and you have saved it. This was a case in which the nurse had more responsibility than the doctor. You are the best nurse I ever saw."

She burst into an uncontrollable passion of tears, and the doctor took her by the arm and led her from the room as if she had been a child.

"She must on no account be here when he wakes," he said to the nurse afterwards. "In case—" he shook his head to signify the rest. "But she will be asleep herself when he wakes. I've given her a draught."

Henry Hampden opened his eyes next morning with a start, and at once tried, vainly of course, to raise himself into a sitting posture.

"I must go—to Nice at once," were his first words, spoken in a feeble voice. "It may not be too late—not too late. Heaven help me!"

The nurse, bending forward to listen, thought the worst had come; he caught sight of her. "Who are you, and why am I here instead of on the way to her?"

"You must not talk," said the woman. "I—have I been ill—or anything?" he asked, trying to understand why he was in bed, and why this woman in the white cap and apron would not let him talk. Who was she?

"Yes, you have been ill!" Was he sane or not, she wondered.

"How long?" he inquired anxiously.

"Three weeks nearly."

"Three weeks less! Too late now! Is it?" he tried again to raise himself.

"I can't—can't get up."

"No, you must stay quiet," said the nurse, firmly.

"But I must go to Nice to-day. My wife is waiting for me. Help me up, can't you?"

Then the nurse remembered bearing, when first she came to attend on him, that his wife was away in Nice, and she saw why he harped on the necessity to go there, and began to reassure him.

"She is home?"

"When did she come home?" he asked.

"Three weeks ago—when first you were ill."

"Mrs. Kilbiss is a liar, I am sure of it!" he muttered, so strangely that the nurse felt uncertain once more as to his mental condition. She let him talk on to satisfy himself.

"I'll ask Liora plainly," he continued.

"See!" to the nurse, "did my wife come home—no, I don't mean that. How is she?"

"She is asleep. She has been taking care of you and is rather tired, and you must go to sleep again. I can't allow talking."

"Taking care of me?" he repeated. "Taking care of me? She couldn't, if—no, it's not true."

When Liora came in to see him later in the day, she merely asked him if he was feeling better, and talked to him as much as she would have done to any sick person whom she chanced to visit. She made no attempt to resume the position of nurse even, and no one seeing such attention as she now gave the invalid would have suspected what devotion she had shown during the critical period of his illness. Not that she neglected him, or did not come into his room; on the contrary she spent several hours of each day in reading to him, or chatting to him or otherwise making the time pass pleasantly for him, but as far as the actual work of nursing him went, she did nothing. The nurse or the servants performed the hundred and one little duties which formerly she would allow no one to interfere with.

He never mentioned to her the subject which was always uppermost in his mind, the terrible blow he had received through Mrs. Kilbiss's intelligence, and which had indirectly led to his realising that other blow which had laid him on a bed of sickness.

Suppose she were wholly innocent, as he firmly believed her to be, it would be an absolute insult to her to speak to her of the suggestion that had been implanted in his mind or to call in question her conduct

because Captain Lancelot had chanced to be at Monte Carlo whilst she was at Nice.

It was Liora's sorrow and not her sin that she loved Lancelot, and she deserved infinite pity and not condemnation for what was no fault of her own. All he would do was to watch over her, to guard her from herself. He would not resort to the merely superficial precaution of forbidding her to see Lancelot; still he would be heartily thankful when the time should come for Lancelot to leave Liverpool. Till that time he would guard her as a man guards his dearest treasure.

One day when he was sufficiently convalescent to be about the house, he was passing down the staircase and he heard a ripple of laughter proceeding from the drawing room. It was like the song of a bird to a man who has been shut up in a dungeon.

"She could not be happy like that if she were not innocent. Laughter belongs to childhood and innocence."

He went straight to the drawing room. She was laughing and chatting so gaily that his entrance was unnoticed for a minute. Lancelot was with her. He observed Mr. Hampden first and rose to greet him. Liora hastened to wheel the most comfortable chair in the room in front of the fire and pointed to it.

"You shall sit there," she said, with a pretty air of authority, "and I will ring for another tea-cup."

"I am not going to stay," said her husband. "If you will excuse me," this to Lancelot.

Liora looked up quickly, wondering what this cold, not to say stiff, manner portended. He was usually so cordial, so affable to everyone. She did not know that he had heard some words which she had spoken just as he entered the room.

"You have five hundred a year besides your pay," she had said. "Two people could live together on that easily."

Had he heard right, or did his senses deceive him? Was it indeed Liora who had spoken thus? Yes, for he had seen the movement of her lips as she formed the words.

## CHAPTER XII.

Once more all the weapons with which the living are wont to combat the threats of the King of Terrors were called into requisition in the Hampden household. Once more Henry Hampden's life hung by a thread, and the staircase of the silent house echoed only the stealthy tread of nurses and doctors as they passed to and from the sick chamber. Before he had perfectly recovered from the effects of his previous illness Mr. Hampden had somehow contracted a severe cold which setting upon a weakened constitution had straightway attacked his lungs.

How the mischief had been wrought no one knew, and an explanation was found in the fact that the weather had been exceptionally trying. That he had spent a whole night pacing the soaking streets in a pour of rain which a biting north-easterly wind drove through and through the light clothing he wore, was not suspected by anyone.

"It was for her sake," he told himself, when the thought that he had unwittingly courted his own death forced itself upon him. "Surely, there will not be punishment for this. If there is, ah! well, one soul must have perished in any case—hers. It is a soul in exchange for a soul. But it is for her sake; and Heaven, that has love for its king, will pardon for love's sake. If I might have stayed with her. But it was not to be, and it is better to be divided from her by the grave than by sin."

From the first the doctors saw it was almost vain to hope; what baffled their skill most of all was that he did not himself seem to care to live. A person's own love of life and his determination to cling to it with all his strength will often pull him through the direst sickness. In the case of Henry Hampden

there was apparently none of this natural vitality.

"I am content to die," he said to the doctors. "Why trouble about me, it is useless!" And they knew well that it was so.

From the first, too, he showed plainly that he preferred the hired nurse to attend on him rather than Liora, which preference made her shed many a bitter tear.

"He does not care for me any more," she thought. "His love is dead with waiting so long for mine."

She let him see nothing of her misery; when she sat with him for a few hours each day, she forced herself to appear bright and cheerful for his sake. The doctors had told her to use her utmost endeavour to divert his mind from himself and his own condition, so she imparted to him sundry scraps of news about the outside world in general and about his own friends in particular. He listened always, but without any show of interest. What mattered to him a world in which he had but a short time to stay? What mattered anything to him now except to die, and by dying to give her the opportunity to marry the man she loved, and so save her from the fate that would have brought her more of misery than of happiness.

One day she told him what all Liverpool was talking about, of the suicide of a well-known business man, one with whom Mr. Hampden had been personally acquainted. Owing to some trifling dissatisfactions, he had taken his own life.

Liora repeated none of the ghastly details of the story as it had appeared in all the papers. She gave the bare outline only, but being reminded forcibly of her own father's death, she spoke in tremulous horror that would have affected anyone who heard, more especially one who had such a secret on his soul as had Henry Hampden.

With a groan of anguish he turned from her, and hid his face in his hands.

"It is terrible; but you must not think of it," said Liora, blaming herself for speaking of death, much less such a death as this, to one who might himself soon be in the joy grip. "See, I have other news for you, of a wedding." She tried to laugh, and she laid her hand lightly on his shoulder, and felt how he was shuddering and trembling. She must interest him in this brighter piece of news. "It's a dead secret as yet," she said. "I'm the only person who knows it except the two most concerned; but then I settled it myself long ago, and I had a right to the earliest intimation. You won't tell, will you, Henry?"

She spoke gaily, but there was a wistful anxiety on her face that told of her real feeling of dismay at her own want of caution.

He was still shuddering at the thought of that terrible self-sought death, and he paid no attention to her hints of a prospective wedding.

"Well," she went on, determined to force his thoughts into this new channel, "you know that pretty Miss Grenville. It is she, and who do you think? A friend of ours! Guess, Henry."

She paused, but still he paid no heed to her news.

"It is Captain Lancelot," she said. Why did he start so, and clench his hand with both his own?

"What—who is it?" he asked eagerly. "What did you say? A wedding? He—who? Liora, tell me; oh, tell me again!"

She winced at the tightness of his grip.

"Yes, it's true. They are going to be married, Miss Grenville and Captain Lancelot. He only proposed last night, and he came to tell me to-day, and—ah—Henry!—what is the matter; oh, what have I done?"

For he had burst into tears, and tears are a terrible in a man. Of course Liora thought that it was merely a phase of weakness; that her news affected him personally she did not suspect. And in a measure it was owing to the extreme weakness which could not bear



this sudden revulsion that he broke down like a child.

And Lora's pride broke down too, and she sought only to comfort him as if he had been a child. She laid his head against her shoulder, and supported him with her arm, but her lips refused to utter a word.

"Lora," he said, becoming calmer under her calm touch, "I have something to tell you before—before I die, something to ask your forgiveness for. I—I thought you loved him."

There was neither anger nor surprise in her answer.

"I loved him once," she said, "or I thought I did."

"And you do not—now?"

"Now I love you," she sobbed, and their lips met in the first kiss of love.

That day the doctors had said that nothing could save him but a miracle. That miracle was wrought, and love snatched him back from the jaws of death.

"I think I must have loved you always," she told him afterwards. "But love is blind, you know. Besides, I persisted in trying to see that other love which all the time had been washed away by the tide of circumstance that brought me your love instead. What I thought was written in my heart was only written in sand!"

[THE END.]

## THE FAMILY CURSE.

(Continued from page 321.)

The listener clutched wildly at her throat; she had known the truth all along, but it was none the less hard to hear Kenneth expound it; but she obeyed the cry which rose to her lips, and listened for Enid's response. It came in the lowest of tones, and yet it was firm for all its softness and gentleness.

"I cannot think of this thing yet; I cannot flout my happiness before Cleo; wait, oh! wait—it is not hard to be patient, and I am so grieved for her. Perhaps in time she will forget that ever she held you dear."

"In time!" whispered Cleo, "in time! Oh yes, yes, yes! I shall forget," and then, slowly and noiselessly, as she had entered, she went away, dragging herself wearily up to her room. She stood by an open window and tried to think calmly; once she was tempted to laugh aloud, but she checked the impulse with a sudden, angry resolve.

"I must not lose my senses now—not now when there is so much to do. They will be happy—they will forget me—and I shall not even care!"

She was very quiet all that night; she only asked, while her maid and Enid watched by her, how Kenneth had looked, and what he had said when going. His message of sympathy she scarcely seemed to hear or heed, as she said,—

"To-morrow I should have been his wife; but to-morrow we will go away—you and I, Enid—you and I. You are very kind to me—I do not deserve that you should be."

She slept but fitfully all that night; but towards morning she declared herself to be drowsy, and bade Enid take a little necessary rest.

"In the evening I shall be ready to start," she said; "but make no preparations until you have first consulted me;" and her step-daughter being gone, she sank apparently into a profound slumber, so that the maid, believing all was safe, lay down upon a couch in a little alcove, and quickly fell asleep.

Then Cleo rose. She looked out of her window with strange wild eyes. This morning, the fairest and sweetest of all this spring, was her wedding morning.

She smiled with self pity as she drew out her bridal robes, and slowly donned them.

The maid, worn with watching, did not wake, and Cleo was very silent in her movements; a pitiful smile still lingered on her face as she adjusted the wreath of orange blossoms on her sunny tresses.

The modiste had reminded her that it is not usual to wear orange blossoms and white satin to a second marriage; but Cleo had said, with a laugh,—

"Oh, I am not conventional, and this is purely a marriage of affection. I shall please myself, let Mrs. Grundy say what she will."

She took one long last look at her reflection, then she opened the door and slipped out, pausing on the stairs to listen for some sound of life; but the house was very quiet, so she went down to the library, where she wrote a few words to Kenneth.

"The fault has been all mine. I leave you now to the happiness you deserve, and of which I robbed you for awhile. Think as kindly as you can of one who deserves only your scorn, and remember it is better I should leave you thus, than live to become a gibbering idiot or a raving maniac. Enid has been as an angel to me. May she have her reward. The death I go to is not a painful one; do not think of it with horror, for me it has no terror. Good-bye, good-bye, my best beloved!"

She kissed the words she had written. His living hand would rest upon them when hers lay cold and rigid in death; but she did not hesitate. Opening a French window she stepped lightly out, and there under the blue and smiling sky, in the glad spring morning, she hastened to her doom.

Went there no one to see and stretch out a saving hand, no one to pity her in her madness. She had sinned indeed; she had been treacherous and merciless; but she was amply atoning for all her misdoings now, so she told herself, poor soul.

Over the level lawn she hurried, and all the while the birds made mad music round her; she did not heed them. Her eyes were fixed on the shining river whither she was bound.

She lingered a moment on the bank, murmuring half incoherent words; then, without a cry or shudder, springing into the smiling depths. The current bore her along, she did not struggle or repent her mad act. Soon she sank into unconsciousness—then all was over.

Half an hour later two boatmen saw something white glimmering under the surface of the water; then one gave a sharp cry, for he saw it was a woman's body.

When they succeeded in drawing it to the bank, they discovered it was dressed in rich bridal robes; the wreath which had adorned the head had floated down the stream, and the golden hair hung wet and waveless about the peaceful face.

"Oh," cried one, "poor soul! it's the lady up at the house yonder who was to have been married. I heard she'd gone queer in her head. Bear a hand there, Jim, let's take her to the nearest house. Cover her face, poor dear! How pretty she looks even now!"

Yes, Cleo was lovely, lovelier now than in life, for—

"Death had left on her  
Only the beautiful."

At the house the servants were beginning to rise, wondering a little fearfully what the day would bring forth; presently the broadening of the light in her room aroused Enid. She got up and dressed quickly. Surely the maid must be weary of her vigil; she must relieve her at once.

So she hurried to Cleo's room. From the alcove came the sound of Jane's loud erratic snoring, but there was no sign of her step-mother's presence. A heap of tumbled flannel lay upon the floor. One quick glance showed her that the wedding dress and wreath alike were gone.

With an awful pang of fear in her heart, she ran to Jane, and shaking her, cried,—

"Wake! wake! for Heaven's sake wake! Your mistress has gone!"

Instantly Jane was on the alert, and caught the spirit of alarm, said,—

"Don't lose a minute, miss. We must find her. Oh, dear! oh, dear! why did I fall asleep? It harm comes to her I never can forgive myself."

They hurried downstairs together; the library door stood open, Enid, looking in, saw the alip of paper Cleo had left behind. She entered, and hastily mastered its contents, cried,—

"The river, Jane, the river! Oh! Heaven grant we are not too late to save her!"

They flew across the lawn, along the river path; there was no sign of Cleo anywhere. But Enid would not turn back.

"I must find her," she repeated, "it is my duty; do not try to dissuade me from it, Jane."

But when they had gone a little farther, they were accosted by one of the boatmen, who, recognising Enid, broke the sad news to her as gently as he could.

She shivered from head to foot, and covering her eyes with her hands, burst into tears. She was glad then at the last she had been pitiful and kind to the unhappy dead.

Whilst the last sad formalities and rites were being accomplished, Enid lay very ill; the long-continued sorrows she had borne, added to the shock occasioned by Cleo's tragic end, had brought her very low, and at times they feared that she would die.

Mathilde Forbes, true and loving friend, had come at once to nurse her, and it was mainly owing to her ministrations that Enid rose again from her bed, then Cleo had been buried nearly a month. A merciful jury had brought in a merciful verdict, and so she lay in consecrated ground; and those who most had suffered through her plots spoke of her in soft tones full of pity.

"Perhaps," said Mathilde, with tears in her bright grey eyes, "she was mad all along, and her madness took that peculiar form, until finally it broke out into violence. Poor Cleo! the curse of the family could not be averted even from her."

When Enid was allowed to go downstairs once more, the little lady, bending lovingly over her, said,—

"Dear, there is someone waiting in the next room for permission to see you; he has been very patient and good."

The girl put out a thin hand to her friend entreatingly.

"Please, not now, Mathilde, it seems unkind to her."

"No; at the last you acknowledged it was her wish; and I think you owe it to Kenneth at least to see him. He has suffered long enough; he acted as few men would have done under such cruel circumstances, and he deserves some reward. Rest assured he will do nothing that may seem to place a slight upon Cleo's memory; I shall send him to you."

And as with Mathilde to resolve was to do, she kept her word.

Kenneth was looking almost as white and haggard as Enid when he entered. If he had never loved Cleo, yet her death had most profoundly shocked and grieved him, and he blamed himself for much that had happened. As he came forward, entreating Enid not to rise, she could not must the glance of his haggard, imploring eyes; but when he took her hand in his she did not withdraw it, and that gave him courage to speak of what was in his heart.

"Enid," he said, gently, "with her memory so fresh, the thought of her sad end between us, I dare not now speak as I would; but surely I do not sin against her when I ask you to tell me if, when the shock of it all has grown less, I may come to you again, and tell you what I have told you before, with the hope that you will not shut your heart against me?"

It was difficult to answer; she was weak, and then the weight of her love made her so

tremulous, that it was with the utmost effort she controlled her voice sufficiently to say,—

"I can never forget you."

He took her frail hands in his and kissed them reverently; but they spoke little after that, and presently he went away, Mathilde going with him to the hall door.

"You will go back to your work?" she said, interrogatively. "That will be best; and as soon as Enid can travel, we are going to start for Italy. We shall probably be away six months, then she takes up her residence with me; and I expect you to be a frequent visitor. I do not think it at all necessary your marriage should be postponed for more than nine months. If you are good you may call once again to wish Enid *au revoir*."

Just nine months later there was a quiet and simple wedding in the parish church of the Barrs. Beside the family only Mathilde was present; and when the happy pair had departed she went to her room and shed some very bitter tears as she sobbed,—

"Enid is mine no longer, but his. I am a selfish woman, but I would have liked to have been first in her heart always."

Several times, in the first years following her widowhood, she might have re-married; but her experience had been too bitter to allow her to form fresh ties, and in Kenneth and Enid she found her best friends, and ceased to be jealous of the former.

[THE END.]

## TINETTE.

—o—

LUIS ROMERO was only a "greaser," which you of course know is the vernacular for a Mexican, anywhere for a thousand miles along our south-western frontier. Luis was the chief herdsman on the Tejon Ranch, and his little adobe hut was within a stone's throw of the larger, but by no means palatial, barracks that served as headquarters for the owners and their office staff.

Luis, however, never grumbled because his house was small and had but two rooms, and more than one of the gay young fellows up at headquarters would have been glad to change places with him, if, by so doing, they might have been served and petted and made much of, as he was, by that black-eyed houri that old Luis was his daughter TINETTE.

"Old Luis has no business keeping such a pretty girl all to himself," growled McPherson, one of the owners. "If I were as young as some of you, I would make love to TINETTE, and carry her off. Egad! wouldn't she make a sensation!"

"Well, rather," laughed Tom Elkins. "A wife nowadays, who can neither read nor write, to say nothing of being unable to discuss theosophy, Tolstoi and æstheticism, would make something of a sensation in polite society."

"Nonsense!" said Charley Ford. "If a woman is handsome, and knows enough to keep still, she can pass muster anywhere. And, I'll be bound, TINETTE knows enough to do that!"

"Indeed she does," answered Tom. "I told her once, in seven different languages, that she was the prettiest girl I ever saw, and she had wit enough to tell me, in the only language that she knew, that she couldn't understand."

McPherson looked rather grave at this.

"Be careful what you say to TINETTE; she mustn't be made a fool of. If old Luis suspected one of you of trying it, he would give you short shrift. The old man has got a devil of a temper."

He got up and moved away from the circle, turning when he was a little way off, to add,—

"Besides, boys, remember—the honour of the ranch. TINETTE is the only woman among us. We must take good care of her."

"The 'old man' seems to have a soft spot for the little *senorita* himself," said Ford, "and hang me, if I blame him!"

McPherson was a bachelor, a reserved and usually taciturn man, who seemed to find his chief delight in life here on the boundless prairie, alone, in the company of his almost numberless flocks, or with some herder as taciturn as himself. Old Luis was such a one, and towards his hut McPherson now turned.

Luis was stretched upon the ground before his door, enveloping himself in great clouds of smoke that he puffed from a black pipe.

TINETTE swung in a hammock near by, that was stretched between two scrubby mesquite bushes. She, too, was smoking—a dainty cigarette; and as she leaned back in the hammock, McPherson thought he had never seen a picture of more brilliant and abounding life. Her black hair, unloosed, hung almost to the ground.

She was dressed, perhaps, gaudily, but it was with a picturesque gaudiness that befitted well her rounded form and brilliant colour. Her feet were bare and brown, but they were small and finely arched.

Luis looked up, with a grunt that might have been either welcome or inquiry.

"No, I won't stop," said McPherson, as TINETTE moved to give him a place beside her in the hammock. "I wish you would come down to the corral with me, Luis; I want to ask you about some of the ponies."

At the corral a group of half-wild mustangs cavorted and played, as if they had not that day done twelve long hours of hard service under saddle and spur, and were likely to have as much more to-morrow.

"You will have a hard day's work to-morrow," said McPherson, "if you bring the sheep up from the lower range. You had better take some of the new ponies; it will be a good way to quiet them down."

"Might as well try to quiet the devil down as some of them," growled Luis.

"I think you can do it for me," laughed McPherson, "and give another to Ford. He is a good rider, and will go with you."

As they left the corral, McPherson paused and laid his hand gently on his companion's arm.

"One minute, Luis," he said. "I want to speak about your girl TINETTE. You can't keep her here always like this. Some of these days some one will come courting her—as you did her mother," he added, as the old man's face began to darken.

A gentler look spread over the swart visage for a moment, and then old Luis, answered, briefly,—

"TINETTE stays with me."

"Oh, well, if you think so, there's nothing more to be said. I was only thinking, now that the lambing is coming on and you will have to be away so much, that it might be a good time to send TINETTE up to the sisters at Brownsville or Galveston, and let them teach her a little."

Luis made no direct answer to this, until, as they came near the house, he asked, suddenly,—

"Do you want TINETTE to know more than her father, and so be ashamed of him?"

"Oh, well, if you think that!" said McPherson again; and then, as he turned back again to his own quarters: "An early start to-morrow is the word, Luis."

An hour later, Luis blew away enough of the smoke that surrounded him, so that he could see across to where the girl was still idly swinging.

"TINETTE!"

She slid softly out of the hammock, and came and placed herself beside him.

"Do you want to go to school, daughter?"

"Where?"

"With the sisters at Brownsville or up at Galveston," answered Luis, as if he were repeating a lesson by rote.

"And leave you?" asked TINETTE, with a startled look.

"Yes, I am too old to go to school. I will go and stay with the sheep."

TINETTE drew closer to him, and slipped one arm around the old man's neck.

"Who has been putting such things in your head. No, I don't want to go. I only want to stay with you."

Long before daybreak there were signs of life and stir about the ranch, and before the sun was fairly up a half-dozen stalwart fellows were riding out into the open prairie, upon ponies that leaped and bucked and kicked and resorted to every device known to the wickedest of mustangs, to rid themselves of their unwelcome burdens.

TINETTE stood in her own doorway, and shaded her eyes with her hand, watching them until they were a long way off. They were riding toward the sun, and as the light grew every moment more brilliant she lost them at times. But the prairie rose and fell in billows like the sea, and as they came out upon the higher places each would stand for an instant distinctly outlined like a centaur. Finally they came into sight thus for the last time, and then disappeared as if the prairie had opened and swallowed them up.

TINETTE lowered her hand and drew a long breath that ended in a half-sigh.

"Rides well, doesn't he, TINETTE?"

The girl turned and saw McPherson standing beside her.

"I think there are none who ride better than my father," she answered, gravely.

McPherson laughed.

"There are some things a woman learns without going to school—eh, TINETTE?"

"I don't know what you mean," said the girl, slowly.

Then, with a sudden flash,—

"Ah, it was you, then, who told him to send me away to the sisters? I should hate you, if he did it. But he will not."

"But, TINETTE, you do not want to grow up an ignoramus, do you?"

"An 'igno-ra-mus.' I don't know what it is. Is it anything very bad?"

"No, not bad. It means one who does not know much—who hasn't studied—that is in books."

"And do people think less of them?"

"That depends," said McPherson, slowly. "Not here, for we haven't much use for books to tell us where the grass is good, or the water scant, or when the shearing or the lambing time has come."

"Then if one stays here—"

"Why, one is all right. But if one goes up to Houston or Dallas or down to New Orleans or back East—"

"I shall stay here," interrupted the girl, with an air of grave determination.

Later in the day there were signs of a storm in the air, and TINETTE became restless. She wandered in and out of the house; busied herself in preparing food for her father's return; tried to sleep in the hammock; and, all these devices failing, she went out to the corral, caught and saddled a pony with her own hands, and dashed away up the prairie for a wild gallop.

She knew the direction from which her father would come, and thought that she would ride on and meet him, as she had often done before. But as she glanced about the horizon, her eye caught the deepening signs of storm, and a certain keen, shrewd whistling of the wind foretold a "norther."

She wheeled and rode rapidly to the cabin, dismounted and strapped a couple of heavy blankets to her saddle, and then set her face again towards the east, and rode rapidly on into the growing night.

A "norther" is a storm that cannot be told in words. There are storms more awful in their majesty, more terrific, in their destruction, but there are none that can so annihilate courage and render the physical man incapable.

TINETTE knew this, and she reasoned that



her father was growing old; and if it chanced that he must ride long in the teeth of this wind a blanket might come good; and it might be that there was someone else not quite hardened to these storms. This was why she took two blankets. She did not think of herself.

Tinette rode hard for an hour, and then began to wonder why she did not meet her father and the men returning. She knew it was growing colder very fast, but she rode with her back to the wind, and that, together with the action of riding and the warmth from her pony's body, kept her from suffering. But it was growing dark, and she began to fear she might have missed them.

"Halloo-o-o-o!"

The cry came faintly, as if from a long distance.

Tinette reined her pony in and listened.

Again the cry, and this time so distinct that she could locate it. She rode a little to the left, and could make out the form of a man lying prone upon the ground.

"Ah, Tinette," he said, in a weak voice, "you see I am in a pretty scrape! I wonder if you can help me?"

It took Tinette but an instant to see that the speaker was Ford. She dismounted, and keeping her bridle in hand, knelt down beside him.

"What is it?" she asked. "What is the matter?"

"Nothing very much, I guess. My pony stepped in a gopher hole and threw me; then he made off. I think my ankle is broken. I can't stand on it, and I'm almost frozen here."

Tinette sprang to her feet, unstrapped both blankets from her saddle and threw them over him; then, after an instant's hesitation, she knelt down again and gently tucked them about him, as though he were an infant.

"Thank you, Tinette," he said. "That wind has been cutting me like a knife."

Ford was evidently suffering acute pain, and he spoke with an effort; but he went on, slowly,—

"They are having trouble down at the lower range. The wolves got after the sheep last night and scattered them. The herders couldn't get them together, and so I started back for more help."

"How long have you been here?"

"Three hours; maybe more. I got pretty tired waiting for some one to come. When I heard your pony I thought it must be an angel, and sure enough, it was."

Tinette paid no heed to this, but asked, anxiously,—

"Do you think you could ride to the ranch?"

"I am afraid not, little one."

"Then can you stay here while I go back?"

"It seems I shall have to. I don't think I shall freeze with these blankets. But you have nothing to put around yourself. Here, take one of them, Tinette."

"No, no; I shall be all right."

Tinette prepared to start to the ranch for help, but just as she put her hand upon the pony's neck to mount, there came over the prairie a long, low, ominous sound—the howling of wolves. The pony trembled with fear, shook himself free of Tinette's restraining hand, and was away with convulsive bounds. Tinette could have cried with vexation if she had not been so keenly alive to their impending danger. Again the long, deep howl, this time nearer and more distinct. She turned to Ford with an imploring gesture.

"We must make a fight of it, if they find us," he said grimly. "Can you shoot, Tinette?"

The girl nodded.

"Then take my pistols from my belt. Here; my hands are too numb to shoot."

Ford raised himself painfully to a sitting posture, and Tinette did as she was told.

"They are coming straight towards us."

They cannot help but find us," he said, as the howling of the brutes grew near and louder.

Suddenly he realised that the girl was standing before him, as if to shield him with her own body from the impending attack.

"Come," he said, almost roughly, "sit down on the ground behind me, here."

When she had placed herself thus, Ford threw off one of the blankets and drew it up over her.

"I do not need it," she said.

"But you will freeze, too, in this wind, and then neither of us can shoot."

Just then, in placing the blanket about her, he chanced to touch her bare foot.

"Tinette! Tinette, do you never wear shoes? Are not your feet very cold?"

Without waiting for an answer, he took her feet in his hands and began to chafe them. The action restored the circulation in himself, and his hands began to feel less numb.

"Perhaps I can handle one pistol now. Let me have one, Tinette," he said.

Then they waited, huddled close together beneath the blankets, while the wind shrieked and whistled about them.

The wolves howled nearer and nearer.

"Are you afraid, Tinette?"

"Oh! I don't know! They are very terrible!"

"I will protect you, Tinette. I am stronger now."

He put an arm about her waist and drew her closer to him. She did not resist. He felt her warm breath upon his cheek.

"We may never see the morning, Tinette," he said. "Will you kiss me?"

She turned her face to his.

There was a rushing of feet and the gleaming of venomous eyes through the night.

"Hold steady, Tinette, while I fire," he whispered.

Bang went the sharp, quick bark of the pistol, and the leader of the pack tumbled dead, twenty feet away. The rest recoiled for a moment, and then came on again with vicious growls and snappings.

"Take the foremost," said Ford. "We may both have to fire together presently, and I want to be sure your aim is true."

Tinette waited steadily until the leader was even nearer than before. Then she fired, and there was one wolf less confronting them. In the momentary lull that followed, Ford passed his cartridges to Tinette.

"I will empty mine now, and you must load it as quickly as you can."

When the pack charged again, he fired five shots in rapid succession, and drove them scurrying away.

"If no more come up, I think we shall soon be safe," he said, as he changed pistols with Tinette.

"Are you afraid?" he asked again, a moment later.

"I am not afraid with you. You make me brave."

Another charge and another volley, with what result Ford could only guess from the yelping and howling of the hurt brutes, drove the pack to a distance and made them more cautious. Until grey dawn the attacks were continued, until finally all that were left skulked away.

The excitement and danger of the fight had made Ford forget his hurt, but when that was over the reaction came. He was very weak, and the cold chilled him more than it had done before. Tinette saw this, and drew the blanket close to protect him from the wind, and wound her warm arms about him, and pillowed his head tenderly. He wanted to sleep, but she knew the danger of that, and so kept him awake by talking and singing, and every now and then sending a pistol shot off toward the howling wolves.

The first thing that the men at the ranch saw, when they turned out the next morning, was Tinette's pony, saddled and bridled, quietly nibbling bunch grass outside the

corral. This was at once reported to McPherson, and he came out half dressed.

"Where's Tinette? Has any one seen Tinette? Did any one see her ride yesterday?"

Receiving no answer to his inquiries, McPherson strode rapidly over to Luis's hut and pushed open the unlatched door.

"None of the boys come back last night," said Tom Elkins, standing beside him. "The storm probably made trouble, and they stayed to help the herders."

"Yes, but Tinette?" demanded McPherson, impatiently.

"Rode out to meet her father—you know she often does that—and—"

"And what?"

"It was a wicked night. Perhaps we had better ride and see."

In ten minutes, every available man, a dozen in all, were in the saddle and had formed front a mile wide. Then they began riding in great zigzag waves across the prairie, scanning every inch of the ground.

McPherson was the first to draw rein. He had desisted something—he hardly dared to ask what it might be—away off upon his left. After an instant's pause, he drove his spurs deeper into the pony's flanks and rode forward like the wind.

As he approached, he saw Tinette half lying upon the ground.

"My poor girl!" he murmured through his shut teeth.

As he drew nearer he saw a heap of blankets lying near her feet.

"Thank Heaven, she has had some protection through this awful night!"

Then, as he came still nearer, he saw that she had Ford's head in her lap and that he himself was sheltered beneath the blankets. Instinctively, and with a curse, his hand went to his pistol-belt.

"The scoundrel!" he muttered.

Then he saw the dead bodies of the wolves, and the firm mouth set in a grim, harsh smile.

If he had been alone he would have turned back and helped them; as it was, he could not help but go on.

When he had heard their story, he cursed himself for a brute. He had his men make a litter for Ford and carry him carefully back to the ranch. All that were not needed for that he sent on to give aid to Luis and the herders. Tinette he took before him on his own pony, and rode swiftly homeward.

"You are a brave girl!" he said; and then he repeated, again and again: "You are a brave girl!"

He felt that something was due her and due Ford, because he had misjudged them even for an instant. He tried to be gracious and more kindly than ever to them both, but something rankled in his heart. What it was he could hardly tell.

Ford recovered slowly from his hurt and the effect of his exposure, and Tinette nursed him.

When he was well enough he decided to go home—back East—for a while at least. McPherson approved of his decision.

"You are hardly tough enough for this life anyway," he said, "and there's not much outcome to it."

Somehow he was glad Ford was going, although the boy had been a good deal of help to him one way and another.

Saying good-bye to Tinette, Ford felt would be a difficult thing to manage; but he did it brusquely before them all.

"Good bye, Tinette," he said. "I am going to write to you when I get home."

Then he was off.

Matters went on at the ranch very much as before. It was noticed that McPherson spent more time smoking and talking with old Luis than he had ever done before. He, in turn, noticed that Tinette was quieter, that she dressed more carefully, she wore shoes now, and that she seemed more womanly in every way.

After a while the letter came that Ford had promised. Tinette took it and hid it in her bosom. Then she told Luis that she wanted to go up to the sisters at Galveston. The old man wondered, and consented. There were many things about Tinette that he did not understand.

The sisters found her an industrious pupil. She studied incessantly that she might learn to read and to write. As soon as she could manage to spell out a few words she opened the letter.

What she expected to find there I do not know. As it was, she found only that which she might have asked any one to read for her. He was home, and well and happy, and was soon to be married. He should never forget the little Tinette who had saved his life. And he sent her a picture of the woman he was to marry.

As I have said, I don't know what Tinette had expected. Some little trinket, maybe, for a keepsake.

She told the sisters she was tired of study, and so Luis brought her home, and she took up the old routine again. A dozen times McPherson found himself on the point of saying something foolish to her; but he knew his chance was gone, and so refrained.

As for Luis, when he thought Tinette did not notice, he looked on her in sad perplexity. Once he said to McPherson:

"Something has bewitched Tinette. That Ford, I think. What could he have done to her? If I had him here—"

And the old man's fingers clenched with ominous suggestion.

### FACETIE.

WHEN angry count ten before you speak. When very angry count the cost.

THE man who strikes an attitude imagines that he is making a great hit.

MANY a warm lover of nature finds after marriage that he is wedded to art.

A "CHESTNUT" is the story that another fellow tells.

MEN are always willing to depreciate your good qualifications, and to imitate your bad ones.

IT is said, "He laughs best who laughs last." It may be so; but he has less time to enjoy himself.

IT does seem strange that the more light you put on some men's characters the blacker they appear.

THE man who points out our faults to us is a true friend; but we feel that we should like to kick him all the same.

WHEN you find a woman who thinks her husband is the wisest man who ever lived, you find one who hasn't been to school much.

"DOES GIBLET move in the best society?" "Yes; he has to move. He never pays his rent."

THE Boston Girl: "Did you ever fall in love?" The Chicago Girl: "Fall? Not much—I just jumped into it."

TOMSON: "Does your wife open your letters, Johnson?" JOHNSON: "Never unless they are marked private."

NOW there is *Leucanthemum vulgare*! You can bet your life it is an ox eye daisy. Books on botany say so.

AMY: "You know Mr. Codling claims to be a self made man." MABEL: "Does he? Why, I didn't even know that he was finished yet."

AN old bachelor declares that it is pleasant always to have two babies in the house, because each cries so loud that you can't hear the other.

A SPECIAL OCCASION: Johnny: "Do you say your prayers every night?" Jimmy: "I do whenever I've gotter sleep in the folding-bed."

SHE: "Will you take a part in our theatricals?" HE: "Aw—really—I—aw—should so like to. What shall I take?" SHE: "Tickets."

"GOING to be married next Thursday? I congratulate you, old boy! Who's to be the best man?" "Best man? By Jove! me!" cried Freddy, highly indignant.

A CORRESPONDENT asks: "Would you or any of your many readers inform a constant reader how to learn to play the flute?" "Not if we know ourselves."

MRS GADD: "You do not show your age at all." MRS. Gabb (delighted): "Don't I?" Mrs. Gadd: "No: I see you've scratched it out of your family Bible."

HE: "If you didn't love me, why did you marry me?" SHE: "Well, when you proposed you said I was an angel, and I'd heard that people should marry their opposites."

EXTRACT from a novel: "The notary, meanwhile, as was his custom, walked up and down the garden, with his hands on his back, eagerly perusing a newspaper."

"DID Spudley break in that colt he was going to on Saturday?" "No; he tried, but only succeeded in breaking the dogcart and his own leg."

SCHOOLGIRL: "Please, teacher, Willie Winchester kissed me at recess to-day." AGED teacher: "Send him to me at once." "Why, teacher, I didn't know you kissed."

SOME of these days a weary and balated traveller will find a railway ticket office is a bureau of information instead of a holy of holies. The shock will kill him.

THERE is no reward, no success, no general recognition that can give a woman such a feeling of utter content as the knowledge that some one person is satisfied with all she does.

MR. HIGHROLLER: "So this is the cup that cheers but does not inebriate." MISS Good-family: Yes, and that's the reason so few gentlemen know anything about it."

STREET PREACHER: "I now ask, brethren, what can I do to move you—what shall I do to move you in this world of wickedness?" ARRY: "Send round the 'at, guv'nor that'll move 'em."

AFTER discussing the peculiarities of absent friends, one lady observed that she had a niece at Girtton who had no legs and never went to bed. It seems she only has "limbs," and only retires."

"I THINK I shall bring up my boy to follow the sea for a livelihood." "Why have you settled on that?" "It seems to be the only industry in which one is not expected to begin at the bottom."

COUNSEL: "Then you think he struck you with malice aforethought?" WITNESS (indignantly): "I've told you twice he hit me with a brick. There wasn't no malice nor nothing of the kind about it."

HUSBAND: "Our coachman wants a week off to get married." WIFE: "Well, you ain't going to give it to him, are you?" HUSBAND: "Yes; why not? I don't see why he should be exempt from suffering misery."

"THE trouble with this family," blubbered Johnny, immediately after a brief but spirited interview with his father, "is that there's a deal too much paternalism in its form of government!"

CURIOSITY is a thing that makes us look over other people's affairs and overlook our own. Xenocrates reprehending curiosity, said: "It is as rude to intrude into another man's house with your eyes as with your feet."

MRS. STROCK: affects the antique in her house decoration. "Yes, she told me the other day that she was heartbroken because she could not get the shades of her ancestors for the parlour windows."

CASHER: "So you pronounce your signature on that check a forgery? Are you sure you did not write it?" Depositor: "Certainly. I couldn't make such a scrawl as that, even with a bank pen."

THE quickest way to reduce liquid measure to dry measure is to take a quart of nitroglycerine and hit it with a hammer. You will then have a ton or more of debris, yourself included.

"FATHER, when a hen sits on an egg three weeks and it don't hatch, is the egg spoiled?" "An article of diet the egg is henceforward a failure, but as a species of testimonial it is strikingly aromatic and expressive."

"Is it hurts you, dear," said the surgeon, as he applied the splints and bandages, "cry all you want to. You will feel better." "Thank you, doctor," replied the little Boston girl. "I never weep. It wrinkles the face."

MAUD: "She is a woman who has suffered a great deal for her beliefs." ETHEL: "Dear me! What are her beliefs?" SHE believes that she can wear a No. 3 shoe on a No. 6 foot, and a twenty-three-inch corset on a thirty-inch waist."

"DARLING," said the young man, "your eyes are like diamonds, your lips like rubies, your teeth like pearls, and your hair like jet—"

"George," she interrupted, "remember that you work in a jewellery store. Don't talk shop."

TOURIST: "My little man, can you tell what o'clock it is?" LITTLE Rustic: "Twelve o'clock." Tourist: "Not later than that?"

LITTLE Rustic: "It never gets any later than twelve in this little one horse town. As soon as it is twelve it goes right back to once again."

"HENRY, do you know that your hair is getting thin, and that you will soon be entirely bald if you do not stop wearing your hat in the house?" "That's all right, Anna. Have you never noticed that bald-headed men always get to the front?"

EASY TO BELIEVE: "It is said that chess was played one hundred and fifty years before Christ," observed the deliberate player. "It must be older," replied the impatient one, "for I've been waiting since 150 B.C. for you to make a move."

A GREAT deal depends upon the point of view from which one looks at anything. The cowardly soldier who, while hastening towards the rear, was asked by an officer, "Why are you running away from the fight?" and replied, "I'm running cause I can't fly," knew his own business best.

"A POUND of cork," said Mr. Wickwire, who is fond of repeating newspaper science, "is sufficient to support a man in the water." "How long?" asked his wife. "Eh?" "I said, how long? You know he would starve to death on such a diet in less than a week if on land."

POLICEMAN: "Look here, young man, you've been hangin' round here for over an hour, and your actions is suspicious." MR. Young-husband, who has been a father for just ten days, and is loitering outside a chemist's shop: "That's all right. I'm waiting until there's no one in the shop, so's I can go in and buy a feeding bottle."

At a long row of bathing machines an important young man walked up to the door of one of the compartments, and, knocking at the same, testily inquired: "When are you going to get those trousers on?" There was a faint giggle, and a silvery voice replied: "When I get married, I suppose." The young man fainted. He had mistaken the door.

"Beautiful, beautiful silken hair!" Philip murmured fondly, toying lovingly with one of her nut-brown tresses. "Soft as the plume of an angel's wing; light as the shingle-down that dances on the summer air; the shimmer of sunset, the glitter of yellow gold, the rich, red brown of autumnal forests blend in entrancing beauty in its—"

And just then it came off in his hands, and he forgot what to say next. There was a moment of profound silence, and then Auntie took it from him, and went out of the room with it. When she came back he was gone.



## SOCIETY.

The Duchess of Albany is on a visit at her old home the Count of Waldeck Pyrmont. Her Royal Highness is accompanied by her children.

The habit so generally prevalent among women—the trick of shutting bureau drawers with the knee—is apt to be followed by serious lameness.

The King of Denmark is about to proceed to Wiesbaden for his annual cure, and the Queen and the Princess of Wales and her daughters are going to Garmisch on a visit to the Duke and Duchess of Cumberland.

WOMEN at dinner-tasters in Paris spend a part of each day in visiting houses, tasting dishes intended for dinner. They teach new ways and suggest improvements in cooking.

The French bicycling costumes for ladies consists of a tunic and knickerbockers made exactly like those worn by men, except that the tunic/feminine is a little longer than that worn by men.

PARISIAN ladies take the centre seam of their long skirts, raise it within a few inches of the waist, and secure it there with a fancy pin, producing thus a rational kind of walking skirt, which shows just the edge of the dainty petticoat below.

The young German Kaiser is really becoming a very serious inconvenience in Europe, owing to his mad craze for paying visits to people without even pausing for a moment to consider whether he is wanted, or will be welcome there or the reverse.

The condition of King Otto of Bavaria is more deplorable than ever. He is quite unable to recognize any of his attendants, and can only be persuaded to take food with the utmost difficulty. He remains for hours and sometimes days in the same position, and his medical attendants are in daily expectation of his death, as he is losing strength rapidly.

The Queen's Edinburgh granddaughters are not going to be spoiled by any bigoted notions of creed or faith. Duchess Alfred is a Greek Catholic, the Duke is a Broad Protestant, their eldest daughter is betrothed to a Romanist; and as regards the other girls, their religious education has, doubtless, been liberal.

PRINCESS VICTORIA KALOLA, Crown Princess of Hawaii, who has just finished a course of study at a school in Northamptonshire, is, it is said, soon to become a pupil at Wellesley College. She is well spoken of, and is a favourite with her schoolmates. Her father was Scotch.

The popularity of the ribbon steamer is already on the wane. Not only has it been appropriated by all sorts and conditions of women to the verge of vulgarity, but the ladies have discovered that a yard or more of ribbon, with a high wind, is quite the reverse of picturesque, as it approaches the ridiculous.

The last portrait of the little King of Spain is extremely pretty, and represents him standing by his mother's side dressed in a black velvet Fauntleroy suit. Queen Christina is in black, as Her Majesty still wears slight mourning for her husband, the late King Alfonso XII. The present King is delighted to be in the country again, and is always with his youngest and favourite sister, the Infanta Maria Theresa, and His small Majesty is at present having lessons in riding and tricycling, and shows great aptitude for both accomplishments. Queen Christina's eldest daughter, the Princess of Asturias, is a very sedate little girl of eleven years of age, and prefers walking with her English and Austrian governesses, Miss Etta Hughes and Franklin Pauls, to joining in the romps of her young brother and sister. All these children are well brought up and are not in the least spoilt.

## STATISTICS.

The population of the world is nearly 1,500 millions.

Four millions of steel pens are used up in the world daily.

The authentic history of China commenced 3,000 years B.C.

Nearly forty-six thousand men desert from the German army every twelve months.

The water of the ocean contains gold at the rate of one grain, or about two pence worth, to every ton. At this rate a thousand cubic feet of ocean water contains about four shillings' worth of gold. If the ocean has an average depth of one mile, though it is probably greater, it contains gold enough to furnish £8,000,000 to every man, woman, and child in all the world.

## GEMS.

THE man who puts heart in his work will always have work to put heart in.

THERE is no condition in life so low but may have hopes. There is none so high but may have fears.

As riches and honour forsake a man, we discover him to be a fool, but nobody could find it out in his prosperity.

The golden moments in the stream of life rush past us, and we see nothing but sand; the angels come to visit us, and we only know them when they are gone.

FROM childhood and its earliest days men need to be drawn and to be thrust upward. Pain and sorrow are the thrustings, the pushes as it were. Joys, acting upon desire, draw men upward. Pain, from behind, pushes them up. Pain is not an evil, it is a great good; and a human being created without any more susceptibility to pain than the lower and duller animals have would be worthless, absolutely worthless.

## HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

**SPONGE CAKE PUDDING.**—Slice some large, stale sponge cakes. Butter some moulds, and fill them as for bread and butter pudding, with alternate thin layers of any sort of jam. Over this pour some plain custard, and bake it in the oven.

**GOOSEBERRIES IN SYRUP.**—Take the largest green gooseberries to be got when they are their full size but not ripe. Cut them across the top and half-way down into four petals. Take out the seeds very carefully not to break the skins. Then take fine long thorns, scrape them, and skewer the gooseberries one over the other, throwing them into water as they are strong. Then put them into a preserving pan with an equal weight of white sugar. Boil them until they are clear, and then put them into pots for use. They are pretty for a dessert.

**VEGETABLE SOUP.**—Mince roughly six onions, three carrots, one turnip, two leeks, or a cabbage, and two leeks; wash and dry these well. Melt three ounces of clarified dripping in a large pan, add the minced vegetables, cover the pan, and toss its contents over the fire till well mixed, then add a quart and a half of water. Let it come to the boil in the uncovered pan; season and skim well. Boil it all for half an hour, then cover the pan again, draw it to the side of the stove, and let it simmer for an hour or so till the vegetables are thoroughly cooked. Now take three to four ounces of stale bread, slice diagonally. Lay the bread so sliced in a hot tureen, pour the boiling soup upon it, and serve very hot.

## MISCELLANEOUS.

The French artillery is horsed with dark and white horses alternately.

The natives of Damascus are said to call drunken men victims of "the English disease."

A recent invention is a shoe with a hinged sole for the purpose of facilitating putting it on or off.

In California peach trees are successfully grafted with rosebuds, thus producing groves of red, white and pink roses.

The French War Office has provided for the enrollment of between six thousand and seven thousand bicyclists in war.

FISH are not so cold as is generally supposed. The normal temperature of a fish is 77 degrees, that of a man 98.1-2 degrees.

The first London directory was printed in 1667, and contained sixty-four pages, with the names of 1,790 persons or firms.

INSTANTANEOUS photography has revealed the fact that the former method of representing lightning as a fiery zigzag was entirely false.

The Legislative Assembly of Styria, in Austria, has passed a law forbidding poor people to marry without a special license from the authorities.

THERE are engraved stones in the British Museum showing that the fashions in garments and headgear of the women of Babylon were about the same as those now prevailing.

A GREAT Austrian specialist has demonstrated that in countries where no cow's milk is used, there is no tuberculosis, but that in every country where cow's milk, butter, and cheese are used, consumption and its kindred diseases are prevalent.

PEOPLE in the country who are annoyed by flies should remember that clusters of clover, if hung in a room and left to dry and shed their perfume through the air, will drive away more flies than sticky saucers of treacle and other fly-traps and fly-papers can ever collect.

THE women of Hungary are erect, vigorous, with fine figures, small feet, pretty hands, rich complexions, and are said to be among the most beautiful women in the world. They are fond of athletic sports and are especially graceful walkers.

THE Mormons, it appears, finding life in Utah no longer worth the living, owing to the stringent way in which the laws condemning polygamy are enforced, have acquired a large tract of country in Mexico and are on the point of migrating thither.

THE telegraph authorities in many cities in France have come to the conclusion that the bicycle can be utilized most advantageously in the prompt delivery of messages, and the telegraph messengers are being provided with "safeties."

DIAMOND is used to cut diamond, and with regard to the first process of cutting, two diamonds are mounted on sticks or holders. The operator, taking one in each hand, uses an angle of one gem to cut off or reduce the angles of the other, and in this way the natural angles of the stones are removed, the dust being caught up for subsequent use.

How to change the colour of white flowers is said to have been discovered a few months since by the merest accident. A young work-girl who was employed in making artificial blossoms for a millinery firm had a bunch of white pinks given her while she was at work, and in order to keep them from fading placed them in a glass of water strongly impregnated with a green pigment she had been using in her business. Some hours later she discovered that the white petals had assumed a faint tinge of green. Awaiting developments she left them in the glass all night, and next day found them all transformed into a beautiful, bright arsenic green.

## NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

**MAKER.**—Declined with thanks.

**MARGUERITE.**—Music type was invented in 1592.

**PARTY FANEOLOP.**—Whit Sunday, 1893, will fall on May 21.

**LORD OREHAM.**—The Marquis of Lonsdowne is the present Viceroy of India.

**BAUER.**—The owner of a dog must take out a license in his own name.

**CURIOUS NAME.**—The maiden name of the Duchess of Portland is Winnifred Dallas York.

**T. W.**—The price of the 4 lb. loaf in November, 1840, was 11½d., and in May, 1847.

**DISTRUST.**—An illegitimate son cannot be legally compelled to support either of his parents.

**JACK.**—A debt cannot be recovered if it has not been acknowledged within six years.

**TODDIE.**—The G.W.R. has a mileage of 2,481 miles in working order, and the L. and N.W. 1,577 miles.

**BOOTH.**—There is no amount "annually paid by the State as an endowment for the Church of England."

**A D O.**—Anyone can make a will. Forms obtainable at law stations or Savings Banks for sixpence.

**MATTIE.**—No Queensland mail steamer has been wrecked or missing lately. What you have been told is idle gossip.

**SCHOOL-GIRL.**—The son of a soldier is "not compelled to be a soldier," although he may have been born in barracks.

**INDEPENDENT.**—Visits for pleasure to the Suez Canal or the Red Sea should be made during our winter months.

**ROBERT.**—The Isle of Man is 33 miles long, 12 broad; from 18 to 20 miles distant from England, Scotland and Ireland.

**A DEPUTE.**—If the property was left to the widow absolutely, it would, on her death without a will, go to her next-of-kin.

**ONE IN TROUBLE.**—A wife, on separating from her husband, may take with her everything which was her own property before marriage.

**LOOMER.**—No use; the thing is so difficult to manage that even haters rarely undertake to cleanse men's fells.

**RADICAL.**—It is generally understood that Mr. Gladstone was offered a peerage on resigning the Premiership in 1855. No, to your second question.

**CHARLIE.**—You are late in deciding to go to Canada. Winter will be on you before you have had time to settle down. It is to be hoped you are going out to friends.

**FRANK.**—If a license has been taken out for a dog by the owner he may leave the dog with another person to keep; but the license is not transferable.

**ANXIOTS TO KNOW.**—We cannot tell. We don't even know what boat is referred to. There are scores of wrecks every year, and except you assist us we cannot trace the special one you are in search of.

**P. S. D.**—The Vendôme Pillar was erected by the first Napoleon to commemorate his successful campaign in 1805. The Communists destroyed it, but it has since been restored.

**DISCOUNT.**—A person who "finds" a dog is legally bound to give it up, on demand, to the rightful owner, and he cannot legally claim any payment for keep, feed, or advertising.

**H. F. T.**—1. A son may be legally a "lodger" at the house of his parents. 2. To obtain a vote a "lodger" must occupy a room or rooms worth £10 a year if let unfurnished.

**LILETH.**—1. The tournament at Eglinton Castle took place on 29th August, 1839. 2. It was an occasion in itself, an affair arranged for the amusement of those who took part in it.

**HECTOR.**—If you allow the crest of the former owner to remain on the carriage you have bought—whether it is used privately or for hire—you become liable for the duty on armorial bearings.

**HANNAH.**—The English pronunciation of the modern Greek line which terminates each stanza of Lord Byron's "Maid of Athens" is "Koy mou, ses agapo." The line means: "My life, I love you."

**VICTIM.**—It is reported that in some inebriate asylums oranges have proved an efficient substitute for alcohol, patients sucking the juice of them abundantly every time the thirst for liquor comes upon them.

**ANXIOUS ONE.**—If you have any regard for the young lady, and desire to know her sentiments towards you, ask her frankly and without hesitation. This is the manly way and will always prove best in the long run.

**T. A. T.**—The sun is above the horizon for precisely the same length of time in June 19th, 20th, and 21st; in other words, these are the three longest days of the year, and as only one is desired by the public the last of the three is chosen.

**VOYAGER.**—There is no cure for sea-sickness, but 48 grains of antipyrine, divided into three parts, are to be taken each of three days before sailing, and the same after sailing is declared to be an almost certain preventive of the malady. Any chemist can make up the mixture.

**IN A FIX.**—If a pledge is destroyed or damaged by fire, the pawnbroker will be bound to pay the value of the pledge after deducting the amount of the loan and profit—that is, the loan and profit and 25 per cent. on the amount of the loan. We give you the words of the regulations.

**IRATE FATHER.**—If your fourteen-year-old son desires to allow his musketeer to grow, there seems to be no good reason why you should object. Of course, you can insist on his shaving, but would that be worth while, unless you have some motive stronger than mere fancy? Boys like to be manly, and it may do him no harm to indulge him.

**POKELED DOLLY.**—"As stupid as an ostrich," is a proverb that the Arabs have, based upon the alleged stupidity of the bird, which, when hard pressed by the hunter, will thrust its head into a bush or into the sand, and imagine that it cannot be seen, because it cannot see; but some travellers state that the ostrich is not so foolish as he is generally called, and that the stories told about his stupidity are slanders.

**AW INQUIRER.**—Which of the Australian colonies? There are six, and their respective climatic conditions are very dissimilar, Queensland and Western Australia being much hotter than South Australia or Tasmania. For South Australia the time for arrival is from May to October; Tasmania, September to November; New South Wales, same; Victoria, same; Western Australia, September; Queensland, April to October.

**MIRANDA.**—Milan, Italy, is very ancient. It was founded in 400 B.C., and was inhabited by many of the Roman emperors who embellished it from time to time. It may interest you to learn, if not before aware of it, that Virgil studied in Milan, which has been successively in possession of Spain and Austria, and France. It remained in the possession of Austria until 1859. It is the third city in size in Italy.

## ONE WAY OF PROPOSING.

Over the balustrade bends a face,  
Darlingly sweet and beguiling;  
Somebody stands in careless grasp,  
And watches the picture, smiling.

Tired and sleepy, with drooping head,  
I wonder why she lingers;  
And when all the good-nights are said,  
Why somebody holds her fingers.

Holds her fingers and draws her down,  
Suddenly growing bolder,  
Till her loose hair drops its masses brown  
Like a mantle over her shoulder.

Over the balustrade soft and fair  
Brush his cheeks like a feather;  
Bright brown tresses and dusky hair  
Meet and mingle together.

There's a question asked, there's a swift career,  
She has flown like a bird from the hallway;  
Blow over the balustrade drops a tear  
That shall brighten the world for him alway.

**BOTHERED.**—The chief engineer is not allowed to take his wife with him in a cargo ship, but the owners may sanction the arrangement by entering the woman as stewardess; that gets rid of any complication that might arise through carrying passengers without license.

**CITIZEN.**—The last census showed the population of England and Wales to be—males, 14,050,620; females, 14,950,398. It is estimated that taking the whole population of the earth the number of males and females born is about equal, but the proportions living in different countries varies, new settlements having a majority of males and old countries a majority of females.

**FRIVOLOUS NELL.**—Much of the slang of the day comes from the low drinking-shop, the gutter, and the jail. It is not fit for the use of young ladies under any circumstances; by being content with the ordinary language of conversation they run no risk of being considered indelicate or "fast." English unadorned is still adequate for the expression of even those complicated thoughts that pass through a lovely maiden's brain.

**A LOVING MOTHER.**—There is nothing, so far as can be learned, which will keep a child's hair fine and soft. Some children whose hair during their babyhood is exquisite, will, as they grow older, have a very coarse and unmanageable growth. This is usually a sign of good health and vitality, and, especially in the case of a boy, need not occasion uneasiness. It would be much better to cut the hair, as it will probably grow more obstinate as the child becomes older.

**ESQUIRE.**—Kissing the hands of great men was a Grecian custom. Kissing was a mode of salutation among the Jews—1 Sam. x. 1, &c. The "kiss of charity," or "holy kiss," commanded in the Scriptures, was observed by the early Christians, and is still recognized by the Greek Church and some others. Kissing the Pope's foot, or the cross on his slipper, began with Adrian I. or Leo III., at the close of the eighth century.

**SMOKER.**—Nicotine is an acrid alkaloid contained in the tobacco plant; it is also contained in the burning leaves. It is highly poisonous, a single drop being sufficient to poison a large dog. Nicotine is so called after John Nicot, a French courier and writer, who in the sixteenth century was sent as ambassador to Portugal, from which country he brought the tobacco plant, and the French, out of compliment to him, called it *nicotiana*.

**M. E.**—The weight of railway locomotive engines varies according to the work the engine has to do. A Midland express engine, of the Johnson design, weighs 42 tons; or, with tender, coal, and water, 68 tons. The express engines on the Great Northern, Striding design, weigh 38 tons. The Metropolitan tank-locomotive weighs, in working order, 45 tons; and some Great Eastern Railway engines weigh 32 tons, in working order.

**REBECCA.**—The length of the ancient cubit, so often referred to in sacred and other writings of early date, varied according to the race. Strictly, it was the distance from the elbow to the tip of the middle finger. Recent investigation proves that the Roman cubit was 18.47 in length; the Greek, 18.20. The Hebrew varied from 21.34 to 22.08 the variations being due to age and locality. Some Biblical scholars believe that Noah's Ark measurements were cubits of about three feet.

**T. MOORE.**—A person desirous of instituting a suit in the Divorce Court in *forma pauperis*, must first obtain the opinion of counsel that he has reasonable grounds for relief. He may then apply to the Judge of the Divorce Court and produce the case and opinion, with an affidavit that the case contains all the material facts, and that the applicant is not worth £25 beyond wearing apparel after the payment of debts. The Judge will then assign him counsel and he will have no fees to pay whether he succeeds or not.

**BROKEN-HEARTED MOLLY.**—The only mistake you seem to have made is in applying the term "gentleman" to the person of whom you write. No man who deserves the name of man would speak disrespectfully of a young girl simply because she had used the expression you refer to. It is a term which is found in all lexicons, and although perfectly innocent in itself, is used in an evil sense by evil-minded people. Your declaration that you did not know that there was anything wrong about it was not at all necessary.

**DOLOROUS.**—Jet is black. There is no authority for such expression as "white" jet, or "yellow" or "green" jet, and such use of words shows either carelessness or ignorance. The finest jet is Whitby, and comes from the English mines of that name. Jet is a variety of coal with a very fine grain, and susceptible of high polish. It is just now extremely popular as a trimming material, and, indeed, has been for some years. Probably there will never come a time when it will not be used, as there is no black furniture which is so desirable and elegant.

**OLD READER.**—Lambeth Bridge was constructed by I. K. Brunel. It consists of two lofty brick piers or towers in the Italian style, to suspend the chains which are secured in tunnels at the abutments. There are three spans, the central one being 67½ feet. The length of the bridge is 1,352 feet, and the roadway in the centre is 32 feet above high-water mark. It was begun in 1841, and was opened in 1845, having been built without scaffolding or impediment to the navigation. The iron-work weighs nearly 11,000 tons, and the entire cost was £110,000.

**ESQUIRE.**—Lithography, a method of producing printed copies of a writing or drawing on stone without the usual process of engraving, was invented about 1796-8 in Munich, by Aloys Senefelder. The following story is told in relation to the discovery which led to the invention: "After the first triumphant performance of Mozart's opera of 'Don Juan,' at Munich, the theatre was deserted by all except one man. Aloys Senefelder had still much to do. After seeing carefully around the stage that no sparks had ignited about the theatre, he retired to his little room to stamp the theatre tickets for the following day. As he entered the room, he had three things in his hand—a polished whetstone for razors, which he had purchased, a stick-clamp, motioned with printers' ink, and a cheque on the theatre-treasury for his week's salary. He placed the cheque on a table, when a gust of wind took it, swept it high up in his room for a moment, and then deposited it in a basin filled with water. Senefelder took the wet paper, dried it as well as he could, and then, to make sure of it, weighted it down with the whetstone, on which he had carelessly before put the printing stamp. Returning to his room on the following morning, he was surprised to see the letters of the stamp printed with remarkable accuracy on the damp paper. He gazed long at the cheque. A sudden thought flashed through his brain; he wondered if, by some such means, he could not save himself the weary trouble he continually had of copying the songs of the chorists. That very morning he went out and purchased a larger stone, and commenced to make the experiments which resulted so successfully."

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